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MEMOIRS

OF THE

REV. THOMAS SPENCER,

OF

LIVERPOOL.

BY THOMAS RAFFLES, LL. D.

HIS SUCCESSOR IN THE PASTORAL OFFICE.

How many fall as sudden, not as safe.——YOUNG.

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PREFACE

BY THE AUTHOR.

The volume now presented to the public, owes its origin to one of those mysterious events in Providence, which seem commissioned, at distant intervals, to alarm and admonish the Church of God. A loss so sudden, so awful, so universally deplored, as that of Mr. Spencer, demanded improvement. Many impressive discourses were delivered on the sad occasion, several of which have issued from the press. But his *life* was not less instructive than his *death;* and the more it was contemplated by his friends, the more deeply they felt the importance of rescuing from oblivion those traits of his character, and circumstances of his history, by which their own private circles had been interested. Upon my acceptance of the solemn office from

which he was so unexpectedly removed, his bereaved people, anxious to see some authorized memoirs of their beloved pastor embodied and preserved, committed the mournful duty to my hands. My respect for the honoured dead, and attachment to the living, induced me to accept the charge: how I have executed the important trust reposed in me, I must now leave it with a candid public to decide.

THOMAS RAFFLES.

LIVERPOOL, February 15th, 1813.

MEMOIRS

OF THE

REV. THOMAS SPENCER.

The Reverend Thomas Spencer, was born at Hertford, England, January 21, 1791. He occupied the third place out of four who surrounded his father's table, but shared equally with them in the tender and affectionate solicitude of parents, who, placed in the midde sphere of human life, were respectable for their piety, and highly esteemed in the circle in which a wise providence had allotted them to move. It cannot be expected that any thing peculiarly interesting should mark the early childhood of a youth, retired from the observation of the world, and far removed from the presence of any of those circumstances which might be considered as favourable to the display of early genius. And yet the years of his infancy and childhood were not undistinguished by some intimations of a superior mind, from which a thoughtful observer might have been induced to augur something of his future eminence, and which his amiable father it appears did with silence

watch. He himself observes, in a hasty sketch of his life, which now lies before me,—"As far back as I can recollect, my memory was complimented by many as being very retentive, and my progress in knowledge was more considerable than that of my school-fellows; a natural curiosity and desire of knowledge, I think I may say, without vanity, distinguished even the period of my infancy. I now remember questions that I asked when about four years old, which were rather singular, and which were confined chiefly to biblical subjects. No child could be more attached to places of worship, or could be more inquisitive about their concerns than myself; and I may add, more given to imitate the actions of the minister and clerk."

When he had completed his fifth year, he suffered the severest earthly privation a child can know, in the loss of an affectionate mother. Though then too young correctly to appreciate a parent's worth, he deeply felt the stroke; and in the liveliest manner he recalls the impression which at that early period this melancholy circumstance produced upon his tender mind. "When the funeral sermon was preached I could not help noticing the grief which seemed to pervade every person present. Deeply affected myself, I recollect, that after the service, as I was walking about our little garden with my disconsolate father, I said to him, 'Father, what is the reason that

so many people cried at the meeting this afternoon?'—He, adapting his language to my comprehension, said, 'They cried to see little children like you without a mother.'" This event, which shed so deep a gloom upon his family, seems to have excited emotions of a serious nature in his mind never totally effaced.

From this time he applied himself with diligence and delight to the business of his school. There was at this early age something amiable and engaging in his manners; and this, combined with his attention to his learning, soon secured the esteem and approbation of his respective teachers, and gained him, together with the first place and highest honours of his school, the character of "*a good boy*." It is pleasing to mark the early combination of superior talent and sweetness of disposition in this extraordinary young man; and it would be well, did the patrons of early genius more deeply ponder the reflection, that the graces of a meek and quiet spirit are far more estimable than the rare qualities of a prematurely vigorous mind; and that the talents they cultivate with such anxious care, if unassociated with real excellence of soul, may render the idols of their fond adulation sources of anguish to themselves, and of incalculable mischief to mankind.

Whilst a schoolboy, he became passionately fond of histories, adventures, &c. which he devoured with the greatest eagerness in num-

bers truly astonishing. The perusal of these he always preferred to play and other amusements adapted to his years. He delighted much in solitude; nor did he know a happiness superior to that of being alone, with one of his favourite books. He took no delight in the games of his companions, nor did he ever mingle in their little feuds. His natural levity, however, was excessive; yet he was not without his moments of serious reflection, and that of a very deep and dreadful kind. He was often overwhelmed with religious considerations, and the solemn sermons he sometimes heard, filled him with terror and alarm. So intolerable at one period were the horrors of his mind, that in an agony of despair, he was tempted, as many have been before him, to destroy himself. Thus, at an early age he became intimately acquainted with the depravity of his nature; and from the deep waters of spiritual distress through which he was called to pass, his soul imbibed an air of humility and a habit of watchfulness, which enabled him to meet with firmness the dangers of popularity, and to maintain a steady course, notwithstanding the press of sail he carried.

To these deep convictions of his early years may perhaps be traced the peculiarly pressing and impassioned manner of his address, when he strove to arouse the slumbering conscience, or direct the weary wanderer to the cross of

Christ.—The sacred poems and the passages of holy writ, which he most loved, were those of a cast similar to that of his own fervent mind; and I have heard many tell, with tears, of the animation and rapture with which he would often repeat from that beautiful hymn of Henry Kirk White, his favourite author, whom in many shades of character he much resembled, and, alas! too much in his early and lamented fate—

Once on the stormy seas I rode,
The storm was loud, the night was dark;
The ocean yawned, and rudely blowed
The wind that tossed my found'ring bark.

Deep horror then my vitals froze;
Death-struck, I ceased the tide to stem,
When suddenly a star arose,
It was the star of Bethlehem.

It was my guide, my light, my all,
It bade my dark forebodings cease;
And through the storm of danger's thrall
It led me to the port of peace.

Now safely moored—my perils o'er,
I'll sing, first in night's diadem,
For ever and for ever more,
The star!—the star of Bethlehem.

The bias and inclination of his mind began at this early period to be disclosed; preachers and preaching seemed to occupy all his thoughts, and often he would exercise himself in addressing such domestic congregations as may be supposed to constitute the

usual auditories of an infant. Thus in his earliest childhood he displayed his fond attachment to the Christian Ministry, and the first efforts of his infant mind were directed to that sublime and dignified profession, in which the capacities of his maturer age were so brilliantly displayed. These infantine compositions were not unfrequently entirely his own; and when they claimed not the merit of originality, they were derived from hints collected from what he had heard or read. But his *preaching exhibitions* could not long be confined to the narrow circle and scanty congregation his father's house supplied; tidings of his early *pulpit talents* soon circulated through the neighbourhood; many were anxious to listen to the instructions of this extraordinary child; and most regarded him, as he himself expresses it, "*a parson in embryo.*"

At this age also he wrote verses. He seems, however, to have had but a mean opinion of his talent for poetry. It certainly was not the art in which he most excelled. Though an individual may have the power of rhyming sufficient for throwing his feelings into tolerably easy verse, yet something more than this is required in a production which, under the dignified title of a poem, is to meet the public eye. And while most men of an enlightened mind and cultivated taste have solicited the muses' aid for purposes of private instruction and amusement, and the domestic and social

circle have been privileged to share in both; yet it is not necessary to the perfection of the pulpit orator, that he should be an exquisite poet; nor is it at all a detraction from the greatness of his character, that the world should hesitate to pronounce unqualified praise upon poetical effusions, on which the eye or the ear of friendship might linger with delight.

These observations will serve to account for the circumstance, that none of Mr. Spencer's poetical productions are preserved in these pages. And while some partial friends, who saw with pleasure the pieces which circulated in private, may regret for the moment their entire exclusion here, his biographer hopes, that he shall render a more essential service to the memory of his departed friend, by occupying their place with extracts from his papers of a more solid and interesting kind.

These early displays of talent, however, introduced him to the notice and friendship of some individuals of wealth and consequence. This was doubtless considered by himself and his fond parent as no inconsiderable circumstance in the history and prospects of a child, who, if he rose into eminence at all, could have no facilities afforded him, by the auspicious omens of his birth, or the rank of his father's family. But, alas! the fond anticipations which from this quarter he cherished, and perhaps with some degree of reason, were not all realized, to the full extent to which

his sanguine mind had urged them. It was doubtless well for him, however, that they were not. The disappointments of childhood will give a sober cast to the else too glowing pictures and too anxious hopes of youth; and while they excite a caution in respect to the confidence we should place in the prospects that unfold themselves before us, admirably prepare the mind for the event, when the pledges of friendship lie long unredeemed, and the fair blossoms of hope are blasted and destroyed.

In the mean time he applied himself with surprising diligence to the acquisition of knowledge. In his favourite pursuit he met with the most important aid, from the valuable friendship of the late Rev. Ebenezer White, then the pastor of the Independent Church at Hertford.—For this amiable and pious man, so early lost to the church of Christ, Mr. Spencer ever cherished and expressed the warmest affection; whilst he survived but a few weeks the melancholy pleasure of paying the last tribute of respect to his beloved remains, and giving utterance to the warm and authorized feelings of his heart, in a most impressive oration at his grave. From Mr. White he learned the rudiments of the Latin tongue; and though the early removal of that gentleman to Chester deprived him of his kind and valuable assistance, yet his father, who had discernment to perceive, and wisdom to

foster the unfolding talents of his son, afforded him the means of more ample instruction, by sending him to the best school his native town supplied. Approbation cannot be expressed in language too unqualified of the conduct, in this respect, pursued by the parent of this amiable youth, who, though surrounded by every circumstance of a worldly nature to check its progress, yet nobly determined to afford every degree of culture, which such sacrifices as he might be able to make would yield to a mind which promised to rise superior to the obscurity of its birth, and consecrate at some future period no common share of genius to the noblest and the best of causes. Nor must these expressions pass unmingled with regret, that many important accessions are lost to the interests of religion and literature by the neglect of *ignorant*, or the reluctance of *sordid* parents, who in the one case have not the capacity to discover talent, or in the other a disposition, where their worldly circumstances are narrow and scanty, to make any sacrifice of ease on their part, or expected emolument on that of the child, for its cultivation.

At about the age of twelve years, Mr. Spencer considers himself to have become the subject of serious impressions of a deep and permanent kind, and to have felt something experimentally of the power of religion. This most interesting circumstance he simply states

in the memoir of his life before referred to, but mentions no particulars respecting the mode in which these impressions were wrought upon his mind, or in what way they operated upon his character, his conduct, and his views. The *general* effect, however, he distinctly records to have been that of heightening his desire of the Christian ministry, for which, it was strongly impressed upon his mind, God had destined him; whilst it reconciled him to his present situation, which was most uncongenial to the bias of his mind, and most unfriendly to the accomplishment of his ardent wishes; for the circumstances of his father's family were at that time of such a nature as to render his assistance necessary between the hours of school, and at length compelled his parent, however reluctantly, entirely to remove him. His removal from school, however, was not in consequence of his father's having abandoned the prospect of his one day entering on the work of the ministry, but an act dictated by prudence, which afforded him an opportunity patiently to wait, and calmly to watch the leadings of Providence, and the occurrence of any circumstances which might tend to fix the future destiny of his son. These prudential arrangements, however, were a source of the keenest anguish to the mind of Spencer. He bowed at first with reluctance to the yoke of manual labour when but partially imposed—rapidly performed the appointed task, and leaped

with joy from toils so repugnant to the elevated and ardent desires of his soul; to solitude and to books; and when compelled entirely to leave his school and pursue from day to day the *twisting of worsted*, which he calls *the worst part of his father's business*, his grief was poignant and his regret severe. But religion, in early life, assumed in him her mildest and most amiable forms. Its characters were those of uncomplaining acquiescence in the will of God, and cheerful resignation to his earthly lot. If, indeed, with patient submission to the arrangements of Providence, he occasionally mingled a warm expression of desire, and suffered his imagination to dwell upon the bright visions of better days, and the animating promise of pursuits more congenial to the tone and inclination of his mind, which hope would give, till, for a moment, it seemed reluctant to return;—it was natural;—nor is it incompatible with the most perfect resignation to the divine will, thus to dwell on scenes of promised pleasure with delight. Such a combination of light and shade is beautiful in nature; and not unfrequently in the history of a Christian's feelings does the sunshine of resignation break in upon the tears of sorrow, and produce a commixture of indefinable feelings, which, like the bow of heaven, are a pledge not unredeemed, of fairer scenery and happier days.

He continued working at his father's busi-

ness and in his father's house, for about a year and a half, anxiously expecting some situation to present itself more congenial to his wishes; but no circumstance arose to interrupt the monotonous sameness of his every day's employ. It seems, however, that he still attended to the cultivation of his mind, and never wholly lost sight of the Christrian ministry. Meanwhile business languished, and his father was desirous of seeing him comfortably settled. Their mutual anxiety increasing to impatience, and his father reading on the cover of a Magazine an advertisement for a situation which appeared to be suitable, they set out for London; but upon an interview with the advertiser they found very great difficulties in the way, and returned, with disappointment, to Hertford.

Some weeks after this fruitless journey, Mr. Spencer was recommended by a friend to place his son with Messrs. Winwood and Thodey, respectable glovers in London, who also introduced him to Mr. Thodey's notice. The first interview between the parties was satisfactory; every arrangement was made preparatory to his being bound apprentice, and Thomas soon after entered, in a new capacity, this worthy gentleman's house. The services connected with his new situation, were far from grateful to the wishes of a heart still panting for the ministry, with an attachment not to be suborned; some of them were

such as his spirit, at first, but reluctantly submitted to perform; yet aware that the providence of God at that time pointed out no other path, he cheerfully acquiesced, and exchanged, not without regret, the calm and tranquil enjoyments of an endeared domestic circle, for the society of strangers, the drudgery of a shop, and the bustle of the city.—But here, as formerly at school, his amiable manners—his modest behaviour, and engaging appearance, soon won the affection of the family, (which was large,) whilst his fervent piety and superior talents, excited emotions of a higher order. An extract of a letter, obligingly addressed to me from Mr. Thodey himself, will best record his manner of life, whilst under that gentleman's roof.

"His appearance, his genuine modesty, diligence and integrity, created such an interest in our hearts, that we almost identified him as one of our own children; he shared our privileges; united with us in family devotion; and I occasionally took the same opportunities of conversing with him on divine things which I had been accustomed to do with all those under my care. I well recollect one Sabbath evening, being thus engaged with him alone, when from his pertinent replies to some questions I put to him about the concerns of his soul and the importance of an interest in the Saviour, I perceived he possessed an uncommon share of talent and intellect.

This conversation gave me an impressive idea of his general knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel, and I saw in him the traits of a very strong and ardent mind."

Whilst at Mr. Thodey's he conscientiously devoted himself to promote the interests of his employers, notwithstanding his natural aversion to business. He even became peculiary attached to the family, and receiving from them tokens of affectionate attention, superior to any thing he had a right to expect, and of which he always spoke with gratitude, he became as happy as the circumstances of his lot could possibly allow him to be.

He describes the exercises of his mind and the mode in which he passed his time, during his residence in London, with great simplicity and feeling.

"At this place my time was entirely employed, as it was fit it should be, in executing the will of my two masters; for the young man, who was active and friendly, I formed a great attachment, and was indeed interested in the welfare of the whole family. Marks of respect were shown me, which were, I believe, unusual to any of my predecessors. I made myself tolerably comfortable; some difficulties and disagreeable circumstances of course fell to my lot, yet upon the whole I had many enjoyments. My acquaintance, whilst here, increased: I was particularly in-

timate with several young men, who indeed were rather above my station in life; and more than two or three times did I give an exhortation at the house of a relative of the young man, who was my fellow servant. The opportunities I had of hearing the word were very delightful, and a higher relish was given to them by the toils and business of the week."

To youth who may be placed in similar circumstances with the amiable subject of these memoirs, his mild and cheerful deportment in scenes so uncongenial to the bias of his mind, should prove a salutary and impressive lesson. Impatience and fretfulness are but ill adapted to the furtherance of any design; and a disposition to murmur, under the circumstances of our present lot, marks a state of mind most unfriendly to the patient suffering of the toils, the anxieties and the disappointments inseparably connected with the ministerial life; and whilst it is an obvious fact, that every young man possessed of piety cannot be employed as a preacher of the gospel, and who conceive themselves endowed with talents for that solemn office, and yet are placed in circumstances, which seem to forbid the indulgence of a hope they still cherish with an anxious pleasure;—to such, the subsequent history of Mr. Spencer, will afford another striking proof, in an innumerable series,—that where God has actually called and qualified an individual for the ministry, he will, in

his own time, and by unexpected methods, make the path of duty plain before that individual's feet. Let no one, then, rashly attempt to break the connected chain of opposing circumstances by which, in providence, he may be surrounded; but rather wait in patience till the hand that has thus encircled him, opens a way, and by events, which may justly be considered as intimations of the divine will, invites him to advance.

These remarks, the result of frequent observations on the ways of God in cases similar to this, not improperly connect the future scenes of Mr. Spencer's life, with those we have already contemplated. For the time has now arrived, that the cloud which had hovered over his future prospects should be dissipated, and another path,—a path to which he had from infancy directed his attention with fond anticipation and intense desire, present its varied and momentous objects of pursuit for the cheerful, but, alas! the short-lived exercise of his superior powers. After a residence of about four months with his employers, circumstances occurred of such a nature as to render his services no longer necessary, on which account he left London and returned for a while to his parents at Hertford; but some time previous to the event which caused his departure from London, he had been introduced to the notice of Thomas Wilson, Esq. the benevolent and indefatigable Treasurer

of the Academy for educating young men for the work of the ministry, at Hoxton. Mr. Wilson perceived in him piety and talents far above his years. His whole appearance and his engaging manners excited in that gentleman's breast, an interest in this amiable youth, which he never lost; and he gave it as his decided opinion, (without elating him with a hope, of the ultimate failure of which there was still a probability,) that his views should in some way or other be directed towards the ministry.

This revolution in Mr. Spencer's affairs was not unnoticed or unimproved by Mr. Wilson, who wisely regarding it as a favourable opportunity for carrying into effect those generous designs respecting him, which from their first interview he had cherished, sent for him; conversed with him upon the subject, and introduced him to the Rev. William Hordle, of Harwich, a gentleman to whose care some of the young men were committed, whose youth or other circumstances did not allow of their immediate entrance into the Academy, though they were considered as proper objects of its patronage. To this gentleman at length, Mr. Wilson proposed to send Mr. Spencer for trial of his talents and piety, and for preparatory studies; a proposition to which Mr. Spencer acceded with unfeigned gratitude and joy. The time fixed for his entrance into Mr. Hordle's family, was January 1806. The interval between this

period and that of his departure from London, which was in October, 1805, he spent in his father's house, and for the most part in his father's business.

At Harwich Mr. Spencer was completely in his element. He commenced the year 1806 in Mr. Hordle's family, and was then about completing the fifteenth of his own life. At this interesting age, when the powers of the mind begin rapidly to unfold,—when a tone is often given to the future cast of thought, and sentiments and habits are imbibed and formed, which constitute the basis or become the germ of the matured and finished character;—it was a circumstance peculiarly auspicious in the history of this lamented youth, that he was introduced to the pious and enlightened care of such a man as Mr. Hordle. In his preaching, in his lectures, and in his conversation, he saw most admirably applied, those elementary principles of theological science, the scholastic forms of which must else have been unintelligible or insipid to his mind. In the liberal and sacred current of his habitual thought, Mr. Spencer would find a safe channel for the yet infant stream of his own conceptions; whilst he would imperceptibly form his character upon that mild, correct, and amiable model, constantly before him.

And to the diligent improvement of his peculiar advantages, perhaps, may in part be attributed that early maturity at which Mr.

Spencer's capacity for the sacred office had arrived. He had the seriousness, and the reflection of the *pastor*, while but a *student;* and when he actually entered on that holy office, the exercises of the pulpit, and the habits of his ministerial life, bespoke the knowledge of long experience, rather than of recent theory, and indicated the presence of a *master's*, not a *learner's* hand.

At Harwich his diligence was exemplary: a judicious course of learning was marked out for him by his respected tutor, which he conscientiously and unweariedly pursued; but besides this, he had the use of an excellent library, with rich supplies from which he amply occupied his leisure hours. He had made considerable progress in the Latin; and soon after his introduction to Mr. Hordle, he commenced, under his direction, the study of the Hebrew. With this sacred language he was particularly pleased, and soon demonstrated his attachment and his diligence, by completing, with considerable labour, an abridgment of Parkhurst's Hebrew Lexicon. This work he accomplished in a small pocket manual, which proved of considerable use to him, and was almost his constant companion.*

* Of this manual he made two fair copies, one of which is in the possession of his tutor, and the other is amongst the papers from which these Memoirs are supplied. The design is honourable to his judgment, and the execution to his perseverance and his accuracy at that early age.

Here, too, he first became acquainted with the principles of Moral Philosophy; and whilst from the lectures of Doddridge, and the essays of Locke, his mind derived vigour and energy; from the study of the Latin poets, and the classic authors of our own country, it gained amusement, and his compositions gradually assumed an air of elegance and ease.

But not only in literature and science was his progress conspicuous during his residence at Harwich; he also made considerable advances in the knowledge and experience of divine things. That religion was the object of his chief regard and dearest to his heart, in the midst of all his studies, which yet he pursued with diligence and ardour, is evident from the uniform strain of his letters to his most intimate and beloved friend Mr. Heward, whose fellow labourer he had been at Mr. Thodey's, and the privation of whose society he seemed deeply to deplore. His views of the Christian ministry became more and more consistent, and the impression of its vast importance more deep and solemn on his mind.

With Mr. Hordle he would sometimes indulge in the most free and unreserved conversation on the state of his heart, and his private walk with God. In such converse he was always much affected; and being susceptible, from the constitution of his nature, of the most delicate impressions and the keenest feelings, it may be well supposed that in re-

ligion he would *deeply* feel. Hence the tenderness of his conscience, and the susceptibilty of his mind, would often overwhelm his bosom with convictions of guilt, and agitate him with unnumbered inward conflicts. Yet in the midst of all he evidently grew in spiritual strength—his mind acquired confidence —his principles became daily more and more confirmed—and he had advanced far in a deep and experimental acquaintance with the ways of God, at an age when such advancement is rarely to be found.

Whilst at Harwich he regularly shared with Mr. Hordle the pleasing duty of conducting the devotions of his family, and frequently performed the sacred service with an enlargement of heart, a fervour and propriety of expression truly astonishing. But this was a circumstance he particularly wished should be concealed; his modesty and diffidence shrunk from the observation of men, even of his nearest friends; and in one of his letters to his friend* he writes, "My situation is comfortable, more so than ever; I am considered like one of the family; of an evening I generally, by Mr. Hordle's desire, engage in family prayer; he in the morning. *O tell it to nobody on any account.* When he is out I always do."

The detail of minute particulars may be

* Mr. Heward.

uninteresting and insipid, to those who knew not the beloved original, the outlines of whose character these pages but imperfectly present; but those who were familiar with him will dwell with pleasure on the faintest lineament that may be here preserved of a dear departed friend, so ardently, so deservedly esteemed; whilst a combination of these varied and retired beauties may form a portrait on which the eye of a stranger may dwell with admiration, and the mind reflect with profit. Confident of this, his biographer pauses to record another and a pleasing trait of character at this early age—the peculiar warmth and constancy of his friendship. He seems, indeed, at this period to have had but one bosom friend, except those of his own immediate family; to him his letters breathe an affection the most glowing, spiritual, and pure; and perhaps no little incident more strikingly displays the tender cast of his mind than that which he himself relates, with great simplicity, in a letter to his friend:—

"This morning we read (Mr. H. and myself) the second night of Young's Night Thoughts—the very place that treats of friendship; I was rather affected at the reading of it; and after it was finished, and we were alone, I told him (Mr. H.) I was no stranger to Young's sentiments in that place. He asked me 'If I had lost any friends?' I told him no—not by death. He asked me 'if I had by

treachery?' Oh no, Sir. 'How then?' *Only by separation!*"

Thus in pleasant and familiar intercourse with one for whom he mingled veneration with affection, and of whom he never ceased to speak with all the rapturous energy of gratitude and filial love—in exercises and pursuits every way adapted to satisfy his ardent thirst of knowledge—in scenes and in society congenial to the tone and bias of his mind—in conscientious preparation for closer studies and severer labour, previous to his entrance on that sacred office long the object of his choice—and in deep communion with himself and God—did he pass the allotted period of his stay at Harwich.

As the term (one year) fixed for his residence with Mr. Hordle drew towards its close, his anxiety considerably increased; he anticipated, with regret, a departure from scenes and society so much endeared to him; and the trial through which he was to pass previous to his admission into the academy, at Hoxton, when viewed in connection with his youth, excited in his mind considerable apprehension and dread. But the hope of success never entirely abandoned him; whilst the pleasing prospect of being again associated with his friend, who had by this time entered as a student in the same academy, tended not a little to gladden and animate his heart.

In November he drew up a statement of

his religious experience, his views of theological truth, and his reasons for desiring the christian ministry, according to a standing order of the academy with respect to young men proposing themselves as candidates for its patronage. These papers, written in a style of dignified simplicity, and disclosing a knowledge and experience of divine things, which in a youth, scarcely sixteen years of age, must have excited the admiration of all to whom they were submitted,—were duly presented to the committee, and passed, though not without some difficulty, arising from his age; but the extraordinary qualifications he appeared to possess, and the strong recommendations of his friend and tutor, Mr. Hordle, overcame this obstacle, and the 5th of January following was appointed for his personal appearance before the constituents of that institution, in order to give them a specimen of his talents for public speaking.

Mr. Spencer left Mr. Hordle's family on the 18th of December, and spent the interval of time between his departure from Harwich and the day of his examination at Hoxton (which was postponed to the 7th of January) at his father's house at Hertford.

At this interesting period of Mr. Spencer's life, it will be perhaps gratifying to the reader to pause, and gain a more familiar acquaintance with him, than can be supplied by a narration of events and circumstances in his his-

tory, by perusing some extracts from his correspondence and other papers, which will throw much light upon the formation of his character, and afford a pleasing specimen of his early genius.

I have now before me a packet of letters addressed to his friend Mr. Heward, dated at various periods, from October, 1805, to December, 1806. Though at the commencement of this correspondence he had not attained his 15th year, yet these letters breathe a spirit of the purest piety, and often express sentiments by which age would not be dishonoured, and in a style remarkably correct and vigorous. But the reader shall participate also in the pleasure which the perusal of this interesting correspondence—this simple and unaffected utterance of early piety and friendship, has afforded me.

Hertford, Oct. 16, 1805.

"——As for the manner in which I have and do employ my time: my father employs me either in writing or in his business, more than I expected. What leisure time I do have, which is but little, I employ in reading, writing, and meditation. I hope he will not press upon me that employment which I dislike, but which however I have been engaged in.

"Mr. Wilson wrote a letter to my father, the substance of which is as follows: he informs him that if it is possible he will get a

minister to take me, in order to see more of my piety and talents; and hopes that it will be agreeable for me to be at home with my father till Christmas.

"These are the circumstances under which I am now placed. I know it is my duty to be submissive and resigned to the will of God; but this is a lesson which, like all others, is to be learned at the cross of Christ: 'tis there alone my dear friend, we can study all heavenly graces and duties."

It is pleasing to observe with what deep seriousness of mind he conducted those favourite exercises in exhortation and in preaching, before referred to; and with what humility and even thankfulness he listened to the animadversions of any who were disposed to criticise. In another part of the same letter he says:

"I am not without hope, that I shall praise and adore a blessed God for the ill opinions those persons formed of me, who heard me preach at Mr. T——'s. Methinks I cannot be thankful enough to you for informing me of it. It has I trust made me more watchful and prayerful than before; that I may be accounted righteous not in the sight of men, but in the view of a sin-avenging God. Thus we may see a little of the dealings of Providence with his children. When he distresses them in any way he does it for their good

All things, saith the inspired Apostle, *work together for good to them that love God, and are called according to his purpose.*—Since that evening I have felt a little more comfort in my own mind respecting eternal things. God forbid it should be a false peace. Hope you keep close to a throne of grace in personal prayer. It is from thence we are to draw all our comfort; it is there we can get a soul-transforming spiritual view of Jesus; it is from thence we get every necessary weapon, wherewith to combat our spiritual enemies.

"So often called away to attend to different things, like you, I cannot say I have written such a letter as I could wish. If I should be placed under a minister, I think I should have more opportunity for writing long letters.—However let us, whenever an opportunity offers, write to each other. Such love as ours is not easily quenched. Let us then manifest it by writing to each other, so as to stir up one another to the exercise of every Christian grace. Still let us keep our eye upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and be constantly concerned to honour his holy name, by a consistent walk and conversation. Then shall we meet to part no more, and dwell for ever with our Jesus, in upper, better, brighter worlds."

Soon after it was determined that he should go to Harwich for a twelvemonth, he wrote again to his friend Mr. Heward, and the fol-

lowing extract from his letter shows the humble, grateful, and devotional habit of his mind.

Hertford, Nov. 12, 1805.

"I join with you in saying, 'how wonderful are God's ways.' We indeed little thought that Mr. H. was the person under whom I should be instructed, when we were at Hoxton, hearing him preach, or I when I breakfasted with him: at the same time, I cannot forbear adoring that favour which is shown to me from God: me who am utterly unworthy of the least of all God's mercies. Goodness and mercy have hitherto followed me, and, I doubt not, will through my life. May that goodness which was so gloriously displayed in the salvation of sinners, and that mercy which has snatched so many brands from the burning, be our consolation all through life—our joy in death—and the burden of our song to all eternity."

The following observations are worthy of a much older pen, and display a judgment and discretion rather unusual in a lad, not yet fifteen years of age.

November 13.

"You informed me in your last that your desires for the work of the ministry had not at all abated. I sincerely wish that they may be fulfilled, and that you and I may be fellow

labourers in the Lord's vineyard. God certainly can do this for us; let us pray that he may. You still appear dubious of your own ability for that important work. I would have you consider, that God works by whom he will work. He has many ministers in his church, real sent ministers, who have not those great gifts that distinguish many of his servants; and not only so, but these men have often been the means of doing more good than those of great talents—and what is the reason of this? *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*,—is all that we must say. And you, my worthy friend, should also remember, that as yet you cannot form any idea of your own abilities. As I have often told you, when I lived with you, I doubt not your abilities, when improved by application to study, &c will be as fit for that employ (if it be the will of God) as any other. God, you know, in every thing acts as a sovereign: '*I will work, and who shall let it*,' is his language—will work by the feeblest means, and the weakest instruments. I hope you will still be kept low in your own eyes, for that I am sure, is one quality, or rather property of a gospel minister. At our best estate we are altogether vanity, and less than nothing. May the Lord keep us all truly humble. Luther used to say, there were three things made a minister—affliction, meditation, and prayer: that is, sanctified affliction, scriptural medita-

tion, and earnest prayer; in which last particular I hope you are perpetually engaged. Pray, my dear friend, for direction of God—pray for grace, which is of more value, by far, than great gifts, and say in the language of resignation, hope, and faith—'*Here am I, Lord, send me to labour in thy vineyard.*' You have appealed to me in saying, 'You well know, I shall never rely on my own strength for success and usefulness.—I know you will not, (at least whilst in your present mind) and I pray that God would keep you still so determined. Let us then pray, that we may both of us be made able, useful, and humble ministers of the New Testament.

"I am glad to find, that you generally hear three times a day. Young men, who wish to be ministers, cannot hear too much of the gospel, provided they are anxious to improve on what they do hear."

Hertford, December 31, 1805.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I think myself very happy in having such a friend as you prove yourself to be. I know affection towards me is too deeply rooted in you ever to be erased by separation. Life's greatest blessing is a well chosen friend, and I do feel it so. You cannot imagine (only by your own feelings) what pleasure I take in recollecting past scenes, and recalling to mind occurrences re-

lating only to us, which never shall be forgotten. I hope we have the same 'friend that sticketh closer than a brother.' I am affected, peculiarly affected, when I read the solemn confessions you make of depravity, &c. You know Paul acknowledged himself the chief of sinners. When, therefore, you are bowed down under a sense of sin, *look unto Jesus;* there only salvation is to be found for those who, like you, are sensible of sin. But I verily believe my friend has already been washed in the fountain of his blood. Yes, I doubt not but you have passed from death unto life; therefore, instead of writing bitter things against yourself, rejoice in Christ Jesus whilst you have no confidence in the flesh.—Ah! my friend, you know not fully how I have lifted up my puny arm in rebellion against God; so that I cannot think myself a whit behind the chief of sinners. Young as I am, I am a great sinner; but blessed be God, who has, I hope, given us both a good hope through grace; to him be all the glory.

"I shall, I expect, be in town a day sooner than was intended, viz. Wednesday the 8th; my father will not come till the next day. Mr. F——, in his letter, mentions a desire that I would give them a lecture (*in the old way*) at his house in the evening. I am very willing to do it, and I hope we shall have your company."

Harwich, February 6, 1806.

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,—I with pleasure embrace the opportunity which now offers itself of writing you a few lines for the first time since I have been here. While I hope you enjoy your health, I can say I never was better in my life than I have been since I have been at Harwich. The air is very cold and healthy: I am sure I have felt the difference. Mr. Hordle preaches three times on a Sabbath day, and is very well attended, and on Wednesday evenings; prayer meeting on Monday night. I doubt not but you will join with me in returning thanks to the All-wise Disposer of events for placing me in that comfortable situation which I now fill. I live with Mr. H. entirely; his study is where I pursue my learning, and in an afternoon I meet his boys (there are only nine) at his vestry, to say a lesson or two with them. I learn Latin, Geography, and have got a considerable way in Doddridge's Lectures on Pneumatology, in which now and then I meet with a philosophical subject; indeed, my dear friend, I really am very comfortable. *O! that my improvement may keep pace with the advantages I enjoy.*

"But, my dearest friend, what a separation between us. I often think of you when in this study pursuing my learning—think! did I say? I cannot help thinking of you, and I

will cherish every tender thought of a friend I so much love. Ofttimes I think that of an evening, when we are surrounding the family altar, you are engaged in the busy concerns of life—whilst I am enjoying the advantages of a *kind teacher*, a *good library*, and various other blessings, you are behind the counter of a glove shop. Yet do not despair. I hope we shall some future day enjoy one another's company, and these advantages connected with it. When I walk out, as I in general do every day for exercise, I imagine you to be here—I converse with you—I see you—and fancy many other enjoyments, which perhaps will not come so soon. When I last saw you, I was exceedingly vexed that we could not have half an hour together in private; but, however, I know you regard me still—and am sure I love you much; and it is some pleasure to think that we can yet pray for one another. O do not forget me, unworthy as I am, in your approaches to the throne of grace. Pray that I may not abuse my privileges; but that whilst I am here it may be manifest that I am possessed of a principle of divine grace in my heart. But I hope I need not mention this to you, for you do, I trust still remember me in your best moments. I have not forgot the pleasure I experienced the last time I saw you in London, nor the affectionate manner in which you conversed with me from Mr. F——'s to my cousin's the last evening.

"I had a very tedious journey here, as I could not sleep *all night* in the coach. But I think I am well repaid. I did not imagine that I should be treated with such care; I have a nice little bed to myself; and, in short, am surrounded with blessings. I take some pleasure in contrasting my present situation with what it was when at Mr. Thodey's; but after I have considered the peculiar advantages of this to that, I find that there was one pleasure I enjoyed there which I do not here—that of your company and conversation; and thus is life made up of hopes and fears, pleasures and pains. May we be among those who are *strangers and sojourners* here, who seek a better country.

"The evening I generally employ in promiscuous reading, as the time is then, as it were, my own. As I come home from the vestry about an hour before the other boys, from that time till tea I am engaged in secret meditation, reading God's word, and prayer to him. Ah! Thomas, you are then more on my mind than during the other parts of the day, for I cannot but remember how often you have pressed on me the duty of private prayer; and indeed, my friend, you are then most remembered by me in the best sense. I do continue to pray for you; and I hope God will hear our petitions for one another, and send us answers of peace. I beg of you, I entreat you, to be earnest in supplication for me, that

if God has appointed me for the work of the ministry, I may be fitted for it, and have a divine blessing attending me in all I undertake.

"Mr. H. bids me write now and then the heads of a sermon of my own, and show it him. I have yet only done one: it met his approbation.

"Be so kind as to remember me to Mr. F——, &c. &c.—I suppose you like your business as little as ever; but I hope you will soon be put in a situation where you will enjoy yourself more—I mean in the best enjoyments. I still hope that we, formed for each other's comfort, shall yet be made blessings to each other, and that in a particular way. Then let the conceited, covetous worldling say, 'Friendship is but a name'—we know it is something more—it is a great blessing; and where the friends have grace in their hearts, it is so eminently and especially. David and Jonathan found it so. I often think of your noticing particularly that expression, *their souls were knit together*. Dr. Young thought so when he said, 'poor is the friendless master of a world.' I am thankful that I have had such a friend cast in my way, that will be, I trust, a blessing to me all through life, and that will dwell with me in a better world. May the hope of that happiness stimulate us to more resignation to the divine will, and holy disdain of the vanities of time and sense.

"And now, my dear friend, my letter draws

to a close; I can scarcely forbear tears while I write it. I hope you will overlook its very visible imperfections, and remember, that it comes from one that loves you. Need I again beseech you to pray for me, that I may find mercy of the Lord, be blessed with every blessing here below, and crowned with glory hereafter.

"Write me what religious intelligence you know I am ignorant of: I see the Magazine here and other periodical works.——And now I desire to commit myself, my dear friend, and all our concerns, into the hands of a covenant God; and wishing you every blessing, I rest your ever faithful and affectionate friend,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

Harwich, April 4, 1806.

"My Dearest Friend,—I received, with the greatest pleasure, your letter of the 29th of February, together with my father's; and, as I was sorry you did not write to me before, so was I equally grieved at the cause: I sympathise with you in your afflictions, and hope that you are now quite recovered and—the rest of the family. I believe you when you say, it affords you so much pleasure to hear of my welfare. O! *Thomas*, pray for me that my very comforts do not become snares. I should like to have had more of the heads, texts, &c. of the sermons you have heard in London; and hope that you find the ministry

of Mr. K—, and those you hear at Hoxton, beneficial to your soul; for it is my earnest desire that, under the influences of the sacred Spirit, your soul may be like a well-watered garden. I (of course) hear Mr. H. three times on the Sabbath day, and I think I can say it has been to my profit: his sermons are indeed very *judicious*, *experimental*, and *practical*, and I find it to be just the preaching I *want*. I keep a book, in which I put down the heads of most his sermons, which, when it is full, I intend (if you would like) that you shall see. I suppose of an evening we have not less than four hundred and fifty people; in the day time not quite so many. There is a band of singers in the table pew, generally a bass viol is played, and Mr. H. preaches in a gown, and I think the people are more attentive than any I ever saw. Once in a fortnight Mr. H. preaches at the *Work-house:* I have been twice, and I like it *very much*. In the week day I go to the Methodist chapel, and sometimes hear a good sermon there.

"I am very glad that you informed me of Mr. F.'s and Mr. W.'s conversation. I liked it all very well, except that about my preaching, and indeed I had much rather that Mr. F. had not mentioned that for various reasons. If you have heard any more, pray tell it me.

"I hope that while your aversion to the cares of the world increases, your spiritual affections are more animated, and your whole

soul, from day to day, transformed more into the likeness of our lovely Jesus.

"'*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*'—You seem peculiarly pleased with this passage; observe, therefore,

"1st.—That it is the *righteous*, God regards;—those who are redeemed by the Son's blood—loved by the Father's grace—sanctified by the Spirit's influence.—Those who are weaned from the vanities of earth and time; whose affections are set on things above;—in a word, who are born of God, and bound for heaven.

"2d.—That they must *pray*.—Prayer is the breath of the new-born soul; a believer cannot live without it, for

'Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw,
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;
Gives exercise to faith and love,
And brings down blessings from above.'—NEWTON.

"3d. They must pray *fervently*. 'Cold prayers,' saith one, 'do but beg a denial.' In vain we offer up lifeless devotion to a heart-searching and rein-trying God.

"4th.—These prayers are *effectual*, and avail much; they avail much in the sanctifying of our souls, and forming Christ there.

"Pardon this digression, as these thoughts have just sprung from my own mind.

"I hope you continue to enjoy your Sabbaths more than ever? How delightful it is

to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple.'

"I cannot yet give up the thought that we shall soon live together again; if we are to be so favoured, how thankful should I be! if not, we must learn to know no will but God's, and acknowledge that the Judge of all the earth will do right. As yet let us not despair, but commit all our concerns into the hands of our covenant God and heavenly Father. We know he will do all things well.

"'Wherein appears the possibility of a divine revelation?'

"'Why is it desirable?' &c.

"I may consult books upon the subject, and here is a very good library. You will not forget your promise to write in your next about grace thriving in your heart. As for me, it is with tardy steps I creep, sometimes joying, and sometimes sorrowing. And yet without boasting, I think I can say I have known more of heart religion since I have been here, than before. But O! what a deal of pride, rebellion, carelessness, and all kinds of wickedness is there in my heart; I tremble to think of what I deserve for my former levity, &c.—But O pray for me that I may find grace in the eyes of the Lord, and live to some purpose in the world. I am afraid that there are yet improper motives in my desiring the work of the ministry. Since I have been here I have

seen some little of its nature, &c. I am sensible that no learning, or human qualifications are enough to fit me for that all important work; and I hope that God will pour down showers of grace on me, instead of what I deserve, 'vials of wrath.' When you give me a little account of your 'growth in grace,' and how the lamp of religion keeps alive, I hope you will retrace some of the path in which the Lord your God has led you, and tell me something of your former experience, present enjoyments and future hope. If you wish to go on from one degree of grace unto another, which I do not doubt, commune much with your own heart, read the Bible as much as possible, and above all things pray *fervently*."

* * * * * *

"You say you should like to see the answers to the questions which I sent you; having room, I will transcribe some of them for you.

"Question.—'How do you prove the existence of a God, without referring to the Scriptures, or from the light of nature?"

"Answer.—'1st. All nations—Heathens, Jews, Mahometans, and Christians,—harmoniously consent that there is a God, who created, preserves, and governs the world.'

"'2d. There is a great impression of Deity on the mind of every man; that is, an indistinct idea of his being, and a readiness to acquiesce in the truth of his existence.'

"'3d. The works of creation demonstrate

it; their alterations and dependence prove them not to have been from eternity—they could not form themselves—chance could not produce them—matter cannot change its own form, or produce life or reason; therefore there must be a God.'

"4th. It is argued from the support and government of the world—the heavenly bodies—seasons—weather—vegetables—sagacity and instinct of animals—herbs, &c.'

"'5th. From the punishments which have been inflicted on nations and persons for their excessive immoralities.'

"'6th. From the terror and dread which wound men's consciences when guilty of crimes which other men do not know, or are not able to punish or restrain, as in the case of Nero, Domitian, and others; and that, too, when they laboured to persuade themselves and others, that there was no God,' &c.—*See Brown, Doddridge's Lectures, Ridgely, Buck's Dictionary, &c.*

"Question.—'How do you prove that the Scriptures have been faithfully conveyed to us?'

"Answer.—'In translations, those books retain manifest marks of their Eastern original.'

"'Notwithstanding all that Christ and his apostles inveighed against the wickedness of the Jews, they never charged them with corrupting a single text in the Bible. The various

sects among the Jews, viz. Pharisees, Sadducees, &c. have rendered it impossible that they could corrupt them, as well as the animosities which have ever since prevailed between the Jews and Christians, so that neither of them could vitiate these sacred oracles, without being shamefully detected. Had the Jews attempted to corrupt these sacred books, it would certainly have been in those passages in which the fearful wickedness of their nation is described, and Jesus Christ magnified and honoured; but in none of them do we find the least mark of concealment or corruption. That they should be corrupted among Christians, is equally incredible: such was the multitude of copies, hearers, readers, and even sects, among them, that it is impossible they should ever have succeeded. Through the errors of transcribers, &c. the comparer of a multitude of copies cannot fail to find a number of translations.'—*See Brown's Views of Religion.*

"Question.—'What proofs have you that man was at first created righteous and holy?'

"Answer.—'1st. Universal tradition; for all nations have supposed mankind to have once been in a holy and happy state.'

"'2d. The nature of things; for it seems very improbable that so holy and so good a God should have formed mankind, in the original constitution of their nature, in so corrupt and sinful a state.'

"'3d. The natural resemblance men have to God in the spirituality, intelligence, and immortality of their souls.'—Gen. ix. 6. James iii. 9.'

"'4th. The express declarations of Scripture: Eccl. vi. 29. Gen. i. 26, 27. Colos. iii. 10. Eph. iv. 14.'

"Wishing you every spiritual and temporal blessing, I remain your affectionate, though unworthy, friend,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

Harwich, October 14, 1806.

"I please myself with the idea of seeing and conversing with you in the course of about *ten weeks;* but at that time there will be something else which I shall not so much admire. Do you ask me what it is? It is, my dear friend, nothing less than appearing before the committee of Hoxton Academy. The thought of it makes me almost tremble. Yesterday morning Mr. Hordle told me that I must prepare the account of my experience, sentiments, and motives for wishing the ministry, by November, to be then laid before the gentlemen of the committee. This you know must be done; and when I go to London about Christmas, I must go through all that painful task, which, as it respects you, is all over. He told me, too, that he supposed there would be some demur about admitting me, merely on the account of my youth; but he

does not know that it will be so as to hinder my admittance. Mr. Wilson has, it appears, written to Mr. H. about it; so, if the affair succeeds well, I shall be in the Academy after Christmas *with you*. That one circumstance, your company and friendship, will make amends for all my trouble of mind on the occasion. You may be sure I shall communicate every circumstance to you, and keep nothing back, that so by one occurrence and another, our mutual attachment and sincere friendship may be increased and strengthened. What a *long* separation we have experienced: may we be brought together again to strengthen each other's hands, and be both engaged in the best employment. You must inform me in your next, how long you think it will be before you begin to preach, and tell me all your places of preaching, texts, plans, &c. I hope you have written to my father, as I requested you would. I believe they are going on as usual at Hertford. Mr. M. continues among them. May great grace rest upon them all. I do not doubt that I shall feel some degree of uneasiness when the time comes for my separation from my friends here at Harwich. I mean such as Mr. Hordle, &c. &c. But my satisfaction will be, that I shall see you who are still, and I hope ever will be, my dearest friend. We live in a world of changes. Life is indeed a chequered scene. And here we have no continuing city. May

we seek one to come. May it be our happiness to enjoy the favour of him who never changes, but is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. When I consider my exceeding sinfulness and depravity, besides my inability, I feel almost *disposed to wish* my views had never been directed towards the ministry; but it does appear a call of Providence. How could I do any thing else than come here. And now, perhaps, a door may be opened even for my being a student at Hoxton; but I shall go there under several disadvantages; for, being so young, I may expect a good deal of contempt from some self-sufficient and arrogant students, (if such there are,) and you know they stay no longer than four years; and after that I shall be but twenty years old, and what can I then say to old experienced Christians? I do indeed feel a deal of discouragement. 'O may the Lord encourage me,' &c. But I shall come under some advantages; for, as I am *not altogether ignorant* of many things taught at Hoxton Academy, I shall find my studies easier than if I had to begin learning them, &c. I wish we could be in one class. Another disadvantage which Mr. Hordle has told me of is this—the students generally spend their money which they are paid for preaching, in books, &c. Now, I shall be too young to preach, for at least these four years; consequently I can have no books, &c. till that time. This ap-

pears a very great disadvantage. However, I would wish to leave all in the hands of God. He knows what is best for me. And if I am one of those who love God, and are the called according to his purpose, he will make all things work together for my good. I want that calm disposition which is careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication makes known its requests unto God. I often reflect on the dealings of Providence with us, when I first came to Mr. T.'s. You, I suppose, had not the least prospect of being a student at Hoxton. And I could not see how my coming there to learn that business, could at all further my preparation for that sacred work. We there became friends. I was there just long enough to secure a worthy and affectionate friend, and to have the notice of Mr. Wilson. Now you, too, have left Mr. T., and are in the Academy. I went, you know, home, not knowing what the event would be. Providence has sent me here; and O, 'what am I, or my father's house, that he has brought me hitherto!' We are now blind of futurity. We know not where we shall be placed in future life; whether far from, or near to, each other. I hope you are happy in your own soul, and that you live near to God. There is a great danger of forgetting the concerns of our own souls, whilst we are constantly employed in studying divine things. I know a little of this from experience, and per-

haps you do. I hope you continue to pray for me, that I may be kept from sin and evil, for you know, '*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*' "

It cannot but be gratifying to the reader, to be presented with that deep impression of Mr. Spencer's call and qualifications for the Christian ministry, which his familiar intercourse with him had produced on Mr. Hordle's mind.

In a recent letter to a friend, that gentleman observes:—

"I have had but one opinion concerning our late young friend, which is—that he was born a preacher; and as much called to it, as Jeremiah to the prophetic, or Paul to the apostolic office. All the powers of his soul were evidently formed for it. While he was under my roof, preachers and preaching were the constant topics of his discourse; and those studies which had an immediate reference to them were his delight. His remarkable gift in prayer, though then just turned of fifteen, astonished and pleased all that heard him. He usually took his turn in leading the devotions of our little family; and in his attendance on my ministry, I have sometimes seen the feelings of his heart in the tears that gushed from his eyes."

In perfect accordance with these sentiments are those expressed by the same gentleman

in a letter to a friend at Liverpool, dated Harwich, 13th December, 1811 :

" Of his genuine piety, his fine imagination, his early attachment to theological pursuits, his love of study in general, his amiable disposition, and the powerful bias of his mind to the work of the Christian ministry, I have repeatedly declared my firm conviction; and had divine Providence spared his valuable life, I have no doubt, as his judgment ripened, his character, excellent as it was, would still have improved."

In a letter addressed to the Rev. Mr. Hordle, from Hertford, he observes :—

" The day of my examination is now fixed for the 7th of January. To that day, dear sir, I look forward with trembling : may God grant me all that strength and boldness I shall then need. It is impossible for me to describe my feelings the night I left you. I tried to suppress any outward expressions of them as well as I could. But O! 'tis trying to part with friends who are become *very dear* to us; but is it not, also, comforting to look forward to a never ending eternity, when those who are cemented into one glorious body by the bonds of divine love shall never part?" Afterwards he adds :—" For my part, I desire to be entirely his, (God's,) but still I find a heart of unbelief, ever prone to depart from the living God. I hope I feel my own unfitness for the important undertaking, for which it appears

God designs me. May he keep me holy and humble, and fit me for all he has in reserve for me in the womb of providence, whether prosperous or adverse."

In a subsequent letter, dated Hoxton, 25th March, 1807, he says—"I am told S——, of Kingston, is going to Harwich: hope you will find him a blessing to your family, and when he shall leave you, may he review with as much pleasure the year 1807, as I do the year 1806.——I trust I shall be constantly enabled to obey the kind advice which you gave me, and to lay every human attainment at the foot of the cross of Jesus; to dedicate all I have to him, of whom I would always esteem it my highest honour to learn; to give up every thing that I may be called to sacrifice for the promoting of his glory, and constantly to seek not my own things, but the things which are Jesus Christ's."

In another, towards the close of the year 1807, he writes:—

"I shall never forget the year I spent at Harwich; viewing one circumstance with another, I doubt not, but that it was as happy a twelvemonth as I shall ever live."

With such mutual feelings and expressions of affectionate regard, was Mr. Spencer's departure from Mr. Hordle's family attended. And this review of them will not be in vain, if it suggests to the young persons who may contemplate this imperfect portrait, the vast

importance of that impression, which the conduct of their childhood or their youth may leave in the scenes of their earliest association. For the most part, the character of the *youth*, is the character of the *man*. If, on the minds of his earliest companions, an unfavourable impression of his disposition or his conduct is produced, there it is likely to remain; but alas! there it cannot be confined; it not unfrequently travels further than the person with whom it is connected, and the character is familiar where the countenance is unknown. Who that has a respect, then, for himself, but must be anxious that the impression, upon which so much depends, should be a happy one; and that the correcter habits of maturer age should not be counteracted in their favourable operation by the injurious fame, or unpleasant recollections of his early years.

But we must follow the amiable object of our contemplation to a new scene.

The following are copious extracts from the papers which he submitted to the inspection of the committee at Hoxton, on his former application for admission into that institution: they were accompanied by a note to T. Wilson, Esq.

Harwich, November 10, 1806.

"Honoured Sir,—With diffidence I present the following account of my short experience, doctrinal sentiments, and motives for

wishing to engage in the solemn and important work of the ministry, to your judgment and that of the committee.—I am, with the sincerest gratitude for your favours, your humble servant, THOMAS SPENCER."

Harwich, Nov. 10, 1806.

"It was my happiness to be born of parents who maintained a regard for real piety and the fear of God; by them I was, from my infancy, taught to read the Scriptures, together with other books of a serious nature. I think I may safely say, that from my childhood I felt some more than common impressions on my mind, with respect to the existence and perfections of God, the evil and awful consequences of sin, and the advantages of being religious; but, alas! these impressions, though so frequently felt, had not that abiding influence which they have had on the minds of others, but were like the '*morning cloud and the early dew which passeth away.*' As I grew rather older, I began to perceive some excellences in religion, and to envy the happiness which I believed serious people enjoyed. I knew something of the form of religion and the doctrines of it, from having been taught catechisms, and lessons calculated to give youthful minds some idea of the worship and conduct which God requires. Yet notwithstanding this, I gave too much (far too much) attention to the reading of novels and roman-

ces, the unhappy effect of which I lament to the present day. Many of these books I procured of lads, without the knowledge of my father. I felt a degree of pleasure in hearing lively, animated sermons; but I have reason to believe that this sprung from a desire to please my friends, and give myself an opportunity of imitating the preacher's voice and gesture. I also composed little pieces of poetry on sacred subjects, which I have since destroyed, because I knew nothing of experimental, vital godliness, and of course was only mocking God in them; but I did not give up making verses. All this while I was totally ignorant of that divine principle of grace in the heart, without which, I am sensible, nothing we can do is acceptable to God. I knew nothing of the Holy Spirit's work, in convincing me of sin, and leading me to Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I knew nothing of communion with God and with his Son. I hope some of the sermons of Mr. Ebenezer White, of Hertford, were not altogether useless to me, as well as some which I heard there at Lady Huntingdon's chapel; but from my conduct at that time, in various particulars, I cannot say that I had experienced what was meant by being born again. If you ask me from what time I date my conversion to God, I must say, that the exact time I cannot tell; but I think I may say, that the Lord drew me gradually to himself, and that by degrees I

loved devotional exercises more and more; and I hope that I have, within these four years, experienced many refreshing seasons. If you ask me how I wish to have my evidences brightened, as it respects a personal interest in the Lord Jesus Christ? I answer, that I desire to cast my all upon him, and wait his will concerning me. But however short my experience in the divine life has been, can I not appeal to God, and say, '*Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee?*' "

* * * * *

"I hope that my reasons for wishing to be a labourer in the Lord's vineyard are sincere, and that they do not spring from any improper motives. If I should be called into it, I pray that I may be kept faithful, and never shun to declare the whole counsel of God. As I know something of the excellency of the ways of wisdom, I am anxious that my fellow mortals may be partakers of the same grace, and that they may be brought to know God, and experience the riches of divine love and mercy in Christ Jesus: and if God should so honour me, as to make me an instrument in his hand, of doing them real good, how happy should I be! how willing to endure hardships for Jesus' sake! As I trust God has given me a desire to act for his glory, and I know that he is glorified in the salvation of sinners, I am willing, if he should call me to the work,

to engage in it. I am aware, that it is an arduous and a difficult work; yet from these principles, I would fain be a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. I would follow the leadings of divine Providence. By the good hand of my God upon me, I am brought hitherto; and although some circumstances are against me, yet, 'where he appoints, I'll go and dwell.' I am not quite sixteen years old, yet young as I am, I have committed many sins, and experienced many mercies.—Now unto him that is able to keep me from falling, and to present me before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, for ever and ever. Amen."

On the 7th of January he appeared at Hoxton, before the committee, and underwent the examination which he had so long and so anxiously anticipated—with success and honour; was admitted a student, and became immediately an inmate of the house. In a letter to his friend, Mr. Hordle, dated Hoxton, January 21st, 1807, he says—

"Two things make this day remarkable to me—one is, that it is my birth day, as I am now sixteen years old; the other is, that I have been a fortnight in this house. On Wednesday, the 7th inst., that long dreaded day—I appeared before the committee. Your imagination may represent a little boy speaking before them. I felt a good deal of timidity, and waited the event with feelings of anxie-

ty."—"I hope I can say, I feel the importance of that work for which it appears God in his providence has designed me; but, oh! I need larger degrees of grace to fill that station in such a manner, as that my own soul, and the souls of my fellow creatures, may be benefited thereby."—"I recall to my mind occurrences which transpired when I was at Harwich—O, may I have all God's dealings sanctified unto me. I want a deeper acquaintance with my own heart, and a more influential knowledge of God my Saviour."

Little of importance can be expected to have transpired, in connexion with the early part of Mr. Spencer's residence at Hoxton. It appears, however, that here, as at London and at Harwich, his interesting appearance and amiable manners soon gained him the love and esteem of all. The tutors and the students alike felt an interest in this new and youthful member of their literary society—and he applied himself with diligence to the improvement of those advantages which he there enjoyed. He was now introduced to a wider range of observation and of study. But whilst a respect to the orders of the institution, and a desire to render himself, by useful acquirements, respectable in any circle in which it might be his future lot to move, induced him to apply with becoming diligence to the various occupations assigned him, he yet dwelt with peculiar attachment on such as were

more immediately connected with the work of preaching. And with an ardent desire to be early and extensively employed in the ministry of the gospel, a desire strengthened and confirmed by time, it can be no matter of surprise, that to this darling object were directed all the hours of his leisure, and all the ardour of his soul.

At the vacation in June he returned to his father's house at Hertford. During his stay there, he preached his first sermon in public. It was at the small village of *Collier's End*, six miles from Hertford. His auditory consisted of about thirty plain country people—and his text was 1 John i. 7, "*The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.*" Simple and unlettered, however, as his audience might be, they had sufficient penetration to discover the uncommon talents of their youthful preacher; which, together with the novelty and loveliness of his juvenile appearance, excited in that little village an astonishment and admiration, which have since circulated through all the districts of the great metropolis, and almost every town in Great Britain.

Our amiable young preacher's first sermon excited a strong desire in his hearers for a repetition of his labours; and his fame, rapidly circulating, produced an invitation also, from another quarter for the following Sabbath. To these solicitations, we may suppose, with-

out much reluctance he complied; and he preached again on the morning of July 12th, at a village called Broughin. His text on this occasion was Col. iii. 3, '*Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*' In the afternoon and evening of the same day, he preached again at Collier's End. In the afternoon from Acts xix. 2, '*Have ye received the Holy Ghost?*' In the evening from Phil. iii. 18, '*They are the enemies of the cross of Christ.*' The attendance at Collier's End was, on this second Sabbath, so much increased, that the room would scarcely contain the people who were desirous of hearing, and every one seemed still more deeply affected by the impressive manner, the solemn doctrines, and the surprising powers of this young divine. On the following Thursday, he preached again at a place called Brickenden, from John iv. 29, '*Come see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?*' On Sunday, July 19th, he again resumed his labours at Collier's End. In the evening the multitude that assembled was so great, that to gratify them all, he was under the necessity of preaching out of doors, which he did with great animation and effect, from Rom. xiv. 12, '*So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*' It appears from the report of one who was present at the delivery of this sermon, that it was remarkably impressive. Although surrounded by so great a crowd, he

seemed quite undaunted, and expressed himself with an ease and an energy which produced the most serious impressions upon many, and excited the astonishment of all. To see the old and gray-headed melted into tears beneath the simple touches and fervent appeals of a youth, but little more than sixteen years of age, proclaiming with the boldness and propriety of an experienced veteran the glorious gospel of the blessed God, must have been truly interesting. And it is also gratifying to know, that by the earliest labours of this excellent youth, happy and saving effects were produced, which remain to this day. On the evening of Thursday, July 23d, he preached at Buntingford, a town about ten miles from Hertford, from John x. 9, "By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." On Sunday, July 26th, he preached again, afternoon and evening, at Collier's End. On the Wednesday evening following he preached at Hormead. And on the Thursday evening again at Brickenden. At Hormead his congregation amounted to six or seven hundred persons, and the place where they were assembled was a barn. Indeed by this time his fame had so widely circulated, that wherever he preached numbers flocked from all parts to hear and see this wonderful youth; and he might have preached every day in the week, had he been so inclined, so numerous were the invitations

that crowded upon him. However, his vacation drew towards a close; and his return to Hoxton suspended for a while these public exercises.

On his return to Hoxton, we find Mr. Spencer preaching occasionally in the work-houses —an admirable school for young divines. Surely this is no inconsiderable circumstance in which our dissenting colleges are superior as schools of practical divinity, to those of the establishment. There the student emerges at once from the retirement of private life, to all the publicity of the sacred office: which sudden transition, to a delicate mind, must often be attended with considerable pain, and may lead, in the first few instances, to a confusion and embarrassment most distressing to himself, and most unfriendly to his prospects of future respectability and usefulness. On the other hand, with us the student *gradually*, almost *imperceptibly*, glides into the ministry, and by continued, but slow enlargement of the sphere in which he is allowed to move, he rises from a few poor people in the work-house, to address most respectable auditories.

On his return to his father's house, for the Christmas vacation, Mr. Spencer preached for the first time at Hertford. It did not happen to him, as is often the case, that he had no honour in his own country. Numbers pressed, urged no doubt, in the first instance, by curiosity, to hear him; and those who are accus-

tomed to mark the influence of similar circumstances upon a susceptible mind, will enter a little into his emotions when rising to address, upon the most solemn of all subjects, a vast multitude of his fellow-townsmen amongst whom he recognised many of his juvenile companions—the several members of his own family—and, not the least interesting object of the group, the venerable matron who had early instructed him in the principles of his mother tongue, and whose lot it was to observe the first faint dawnings of a talent, then fast hastening to its fullest exercise and strength. But long after the influence of novelty may be supposed to have subsided, he continued to excite the admiration of his native town. His first sermon at Hertford was preached on the evening of Sunday, December 20th, at the Rev. Mr. Maslin's chapel, from Eph. v. 11, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." He preached again on the Wednesday evening following, and on the evening of Christmas day, on which occasion his text was Mic. v. 2. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting."

The passages of scripture selected by Mr. Spencer, as the subjects of his earliest discourses afford another demonstration, in ad-

dition to many others, of the general bias of his mind. They are such as one may well imagine a preacher panting for the salvation of his fellow men, would select for the commencement of his public labours.

The topics which they suggest are of all others the most solemn, as they are the most simple and the most important in the whole range of inspired truth; and hence they were best adapted to the preacher's age, and the unlettered character of his auditors. It seems, that in his earliest sermons there was nothing of that parade and glare—nothing of that excessive fondness of figures and love of imagery, which too often mark the first compositions of youthful preachers—preachers who, in a more advanced state of their ministry, have not been less respectable or useful than he.

We now arrive at a period in Mr. Spencer's history, peculiarly critical and important.—During the vacation of Christmas, 1807, the Rev. Mr. Leifchild, of Kensington, was supplying the pulpit at Hoxton chapel. One Sabbath afternoon, in January, Mr. Spencer being then returned to the academy from Hertford, Mr. L. expressed a wish that he should assist him in the public service, by reading the scriptures and engaging in prayer. The request was granted, and an extract of a letter obligingly addressed by that gentleman to me, will convey a lively picture of the deep impression which his appearance and manner produced

upon the large congregation before whom he stood.

"—— But when he appeared in the pulpit —after the first emotions of surprise were over, and after the mistakes of some, who supposed that he was a little boy belonging to the gallery, who, from ignorance or thoughtlessness, had gone up the pulpit stairs, instead of those leading to his seat, had been corrected, so sweetly did he read the chapter, so earnestly, so scripturally, experimentally, did he engage in prayer, that for the whole six sabbaths afterwards he became the chief magnet of attraction to the place. The people now insisted upon it he should preach. I need not name his subsequent success."

The entreaties of the people having prevailed, Mr. Spencer, though contrary to the standing order of the institution, was allowed to preach. It was a delicate situation. Yet it was one to which he had long and anxiously aspired. Indeed, so strong was his desire for the public engagements of the ministry, that the fear of being long denied the gratification of his wishes, on account of his youth, actually preyed upon his spirits so severely as even to affect his health. But it was not from the love of fame or popular applause that he cherished this desire, but from the hope of being early and extensively useful;—as if urged by a presentiment of his impending fate —immediately to commence those honourable

labours from which he was to be called so soon.—When he appeared in the pulpit at Hoxton, a youth just seventeen years of age, he betrayed none of that distressing anxiety which marks the candidate for public approbation; but stood with all the dignified composure, and spoke with all the unembarrassed energy of an ambassador for Christ. His text was, Psalm xxxii. 6, "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found; surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto thee!"—At the close of his discourse, the sentiments which dwelt upon the lips and countenances of his auditors were those of pleasure, admiration, and surprise. His excessive youth,—the simplicity of his appearance—the modest dignity of his manner—the sweetness of his voice—the weight and importance of his doctrine—and the force—the affection—and the fervour with which he directed it to the hearts and consciences of those who heard him—charmed and delighted, whilst they edified. And retiring from the sanctuary to the social circle, they dwelt alternately on the loveliness of the preacher, and the importance of the truths which they had heard from his lips.

Mr. Spencer now became the topic of general discourse,—the subject of universal inquiry. His name spread far and wide. His danger became daily more and more immi-

nent. Letters pressed upon him, filled with flattery—invitations arrived at the academy from all parts, for his services; and he appeared, as a friend who witnessed his sudden and extraordinary elevation observed, like one standing on the brow of a precipice, amid the most violent gusts of wind.

But the preaching of Mr. Spencer, even in his earliest discourses, was not of that light and meretricious kind which may secure the temporary admiration of the wandering and unsettled. It possessed much of the solid—the experimental, and judicious; and this secured him the attention and esteem of those, whose approbation any man would esteem it an honour to possess. But this only tended to heighten his danger. God, however, gave him grace equal to his day. His letters during his popularity in London, breathe the same spirit of humility as that which marked his earlier correspondence, and a piety seldom surpassed in fervour and sincerity, tended to preserve him steady in the midst of that tempestuous sea, upon whose billows, though young and inexperienced, it was his lot to ride.

Numerous and pressing however as were the invitations from different parts of the metropolis and its neighbourhood, yet Mr. Spencer did not preach again in London (except in the work-houses, which the students regularly supplied, and also once in a small chapel in Hackney Road) until September.

In the mean while his talent for preaching had ample exercise in various parts of the country, which during this period he was allowed to visit. So that, from January 7th to September 8th, he preached no less than sixty times. The following are the principal places which were then favoured with his labours:—*Roydon*, *Godmanchester*, *Ripton*, *Buntingford*, *Hertford*, *Dorking*, *Rumford*, *Harlow*, *Royston*, *Hadham*, *Hays*, *Chigwell*, and *Mill-Hill*. At these places the attention he excited was considerable, and the impression he left remains with the people to this day.

Mr. Spencer's second sermon at Hoxton chapel was delivered on the evening of Thursday, September 8th. It confirmed the opinion of his excellence produced by the first. His text was, Acts x. 36, "He is the Lord of all."

The general sentiments of approbation and delight at first excited by his youthful appearance and his extraordinary pulpit talents, was now deepened and established, and he began to preach pretty extensively in the pulpits of the metropolis and its neighbourhood. On Sunday, September 18th, we find him in the pulpit at Holywell-Mount chapel, and on the Sunday following in that at Kennington chapel; and in the afternoon of Sunday December 13th, he supplied the chapel in Old Gravel Lane, Wapping. During the autumn of this year he also visited several parts of the country immediately surrounding London; and he

preached, among other places, at *Upminster*, *Upsom*, *Guilford*, *Roydon*, and *High Wycombe*.

Mr. Spencer again preached at Hoxton chapel on Christmas day, morning and evening; and also delivered an address, on the following evening, at the prayer meeting. A day or two after he left London for *Brighton*, and preached his first sermon in that celebrated seat of gaiety and fashion, on the evening of Thursday, December 29th, at the Countess of Huntingdon's chapel, from Zech. vi. 12. "Behold the man whose name is the branch, and he shall build the temple of the Lord."—On Sunday, 1st January, 1809, he preached in the afternoon at the Rev. Mr. Styles's chapel, and again in the evening at the Countess's.

Mr. Spencer preached again at the Countess of Huntingdon's chapel at Brighton, on Thursday evening, January 5th, and left that place on the following day. On the ensuing Sunday he preached at Holloway, morning and afternoon; and on the evening of Tuesday the 10th, addressed an immense congregation from the pulpit of that truly excellent man, the Rev. Rowland Hill, at Surry chapel. The subject of his discourse was Deut. xxxiii. 3; "Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet, every one shall receive of thy words!"

Between this date and the following mid-

summer, his labours appear to have been, in point both of number and success, truly astonishing. He now preached much in and about London, and wherever his name was announced, the crowd that flocked to his ministry, proved how extensive and deep the impression was which it had excited. Besides occupying many of the most respectable pulpits in the metropolis, during this period, he visited and preached in the following places, *Guilford*, *Epsom*, *Worthing*, *Barking*, *Roydon*, *Dorking*, *Buntingford*, *Winchmore-Hill*, *Saffron*, *Walden*, and *Hertford*.

During his stay at Worthing, which was in the month of February, he made several excursions to Brighton, which became more endeared to him by every visit. The attachment was mutual. His ministry excited universal attention: multitudes pressed to hear him. The public prints declared their admiration of his powers; and the private circle forgot the trifling topics of the day, intent upon the discussion of his rare and extraordinary talents. More especially did he bind to him, in affectionate remembrance, the hearts of the young, by the warmth, simplicity, and affection of his addresses to them: and in no place which was honoured by his labours, was his worth more fully appreciated in life, or his loss more deeply and universally lamented in death.

On the evening of Thursday, the 18th of May, he preached again at Hoxton chapel.

His text on that occasion was Isaiah lxi. 10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."

But by so much preaching and fatigue, his strength became exhausted, and his health impaired; and during the midsummer vacation, the committee superintending the stations of the preaching students, appointed him to spend some weeks at Dorking, in Surrey, where the labour was but small, the retirement deep, the country beautiful, and the air salubrious! To this place he went in the beginning of July—having first paid a visit to his family at Hertford, and preached again in his native town.

During his stay at Dorking it was his happiness to form a friendship the most intimate and endeared with Mr. J. Haddon, of London; and on the return of that gentleman to town, Mr. Spencer began a correspondence with him, which continued till his death. The following are extracts.

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

Dorking, July 25th, 1809.

"MY WORTHY FRIEND,—I should know very little of the trials and difficulties of life, were I always to live as I now do; I really feel sometimes as if I needed something to quicken me to diligence, and put the graces of the Spirit in exercise, which, I am afraid, were I

long to glide down life's stream so easily as I now do, would begin to die. Ease is a dangerous foe to the prosperity of religion in the soul, and opposition of some kind is essentially necessary for us who profess a religion which is described as a race to be run, as a battle to be fought, and which is represented to us by every metaphor which gives us the idea of active labour and unceasing exertion. That the good will of Him who dwelleth in the bush may ever countenance and console you; that the divine Spirit may ever lead you into all the truth; that you may possess every evidence that you have found favour in the sight of the Lord; and that Christ Jesus may be your eternal portion, is my humble, earnest prayer. Let us hope hereafter to behold his face together, in a world where we shall be liable to change and separation no more, but where we shall be enclosed in glory, changeless as his own. This is the desire of one who can truly call himself, yours, most affectionately,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

Mr. Spencer left Dorking after the last Sabbath in July: and preached the six following Sundays in and about London. The places at which he laboured during the six weeks were, White-Row, Pell-street, Jewin-street, Camden-chapel, Adelphi-chapel, and Hoxton-chapel. At Jewin-street he preached four Sabbaths out of the six, afternoons and evenings.

In the meanwhile his health still continued but indifferent, and indeed so much exertion both of mental and of physical strength was but ill calculated to promote its vigour. His mind, however, seemed every day to grow in activity and zeal. In the pulpit,—in society, he was all animation and life. Like most who are the victims of much nervous irritability, his flow of spirits was excessive, which frequently led to ungenerous and merciless observations from those, who either had not the wisdom or the candour to attribute what might appear as levity in him, to its real cause. It is indeed an unhappy circumstance, when such is the natural tendency of a man's mental constitution, and from nothing perhaps have young ministers suffered more than this. At the same time, it is a shame and scandal to the Christian world, that there should be so many, who, professing to be the friends of students and youthful preachers, encourage and excite this unhappy bias, for their own amusement, and are then the first to censure the youth they have betrayed.

But where such is the *natural* disposition of a pious and devoted mind, its exercise in company is often followed by the keenest anguish and the deepest melancholy, in hours of solitude and reflection. The severe and malignant censurer should remember, that he is not omnipresent; and that there may be scenes in the retired life of the character he

injures, which would put him to the blush! These remarks have been suggested by some passages in the following letter.

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

Hoxton, August 15, 1809.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am sorry to inform you, that it is not in my power to gratify yourself, to please our friends, or to fulfil my own wishes, by devoting any evening in the week to visiting. I really cannot do it. My engagements this week are such as peremptorily to require my continuance at home, most likely till Sabbath day, at any rate till Saturday afternoon. I am obliged to those kind friends who expressed their concern about my exertions. I feel that I am not worthy of their sympathy. May their compassion lead them to pray for me, that I may be strengthened with all might by the Spirit in my inner man; and that He whose pleasure it is to increase strength to those that have no might, would help the infirmities of one who is weaker than a bruised reed, and yet has undertaken an office, to the discharge of which an angel is incompetent. My health is certainly in a better condition than it has been, but I am afraid I am still far from well; my head frequently aches, and I feel a sickness in my stomach. These are some of the miseries that flesh is heir to; but it is a joyful thought, that in the kingdom of glory our

bodies will be no longer susceptible of pain, nor our minds of disquietude. Perfect health, composure, and joy, will be our happy lot when we see each other in a better world. And can we not hope that we shall do this; and that for ever we shall adore our common Saviour together? The leadings of his providence first brought us acquainted with each other; and the methods of his grace will, I hope, lead us on to glory; and in our way thither make us helps to each other. Pray for *me*, that my diligence may be excited; my levities checked; and my spirituality promoted. After all I say against the world, I must confess with shame in that I am very like many men of the world in this respect; that I indulge in a lightness of disposition which is inconsistent with the character of a Christian, and makes us resemble those who never think of eternity and the solemnities of religion. Ah! my dear friend and brother, I have experienced in my short life many a bitter hour, occasioned by my own folly in this respect. But what a scandal is it to a professing Christian, that natural dispositions and surrounding temptations should overcome a principle of grace in the heart—a principle which ought ever to operate powerfully in weaning us from folly, and making us every day more and more serious and holy. Never do you be afraid of cautioning, or reproving me, but give me opportunity to prove that

Faithful are the words of a friend!' I have felt more, in reference to yourself, than I have ever yet expressed. More affection for you; more gratitude that Providence placed you in my way; and more determination to make you my counsellor and friend—than I have ever yet told you. The Lord help us to strengthen each other's hands in his good ways."

The history of the following month is from the pen of his most intimate friend.

"At his return (from Dorking) he supplied Jewin-street meeting for a month, in the afternoons and evenings, where the attention he excited will not be easily forgotten. Before he left, numbers could not get admittance. The church were very anxious that he should settle among them, but their desire could not be complied with! I have heard him blamed respecting that business; but it was only by those who did not know the circumstances of the case. I was in possession of his heart in that affair; and it would be unjust to his memory not to declare, that he was free from blame. His affectionate spirit keenly felt for them in their disappointment. 'The good people at Jewin-street,' said he, in a letter to me, 'have a strong claim upon our prayers;' and it was to soothe their minds that he composed his sermon upon Isaiah xxxiii. 20. The time of his supplying at Jewin-street was very pleasant to me. I claimed the whole of his

time between and after the services, which inclined him to enjoy that retirement which was so congenial to his lowly soul. When going to preach no one saw him.—I used to knock at his door—give in his refreshment—and watch the time for him.—It was from the mount of communion that he always went to the pulpit, and this caused his sermons to shine gloriously. Frequently in passing to the house of God we kept perfect silence, while his mind has been so entirely absorbed, that I have found a necessity for guiding him; and after worship he loved to stop as long as he conveniently could, that he might pass away unnoticed. But such was the character of Spencer—his deep humility—fervent piety—and amiable simplicity, that I am fully convinced it cannot be fairly stated without suspicion of exaggeration; and I confess that I should have found some difficulty in giving fallen nature credit for the excellences, which, from the closest inspection, I saw resident in that truly illustrious and holy youth."

Having completed his engagements at Jew-in-street, Spencer's labours became again miscellaneous and widely diffused. On Sabbath day 17th, he preached at Roydon, a village near Hertford, when he availed himself of the opportunity which this appointment afforded him of visiting his family. I cannot but conceive the bliss which such occasional interviews would cause in that little circle, which

had once the happiness to call him theirs. To them the recollection of those happy hours devoted to social or sacred intercourse with their departed friend, must yield a soothing, though a melancholy pleasure. Nor is the reflection less honourable to his memory, than it is consolatory to their minds. In the midst of the unbounded popularity which he enjoyed—surrounded by new and splendid connexions—the admiration of listening crowds, each eager to express his approbation—all ambitious of his friendship—he ever thought with the warmest affection upon those whom he had left in that obscurity from which he had himself emerged.—Gladly did he seize the opportunity, when it occurred, of retiring from the public eye to taste again the tranquil pleasures of his home, and enjoy the interchange of all those sacred and delightful feelings, which strengthen and endear the ties and obligations of social or domestic life.—He was not unduly elated by his popularity. In his new associations he did not forget his kindred and his father's house.—His family did not sink in his regard, in proportion as he rose to eminence. The voice of universal praise did not drown the milder whispers of paternal love.

Before his departure for Roydon, the following letter was addressed by Mr. Spencer to his friend.

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

Thursday Evening, Sept. 14, 1809.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I know you wish me to write you a great deal; but I must plead the old excuse—want of time; for I find that ——, instead of calling to-morrow morning, must have this directly, and I have but this minute left the chapel. You tell me your 'mind recoils from public duty, however plain and clear,' and you need not to be told that this is a pity; and in this respect you do not display that Christian boldness which is, after all, consistent with genuine humility—which the apostle displayed and enforced—which the Bible every where recommends—and which is well calculated to evidence our decided attachment to Jesus and his cause. It shall be my part, however, not to reproach you for the want of it, but to carry your wants before our Father's throne, and entreat him to fill you with all holy boldness and Christian courage; whilst at the same time I would most earnestly entreat you to consider the foolishness of your fears; the little need we have to seek to please our fellow-creatures, or to dread them; and above all, the constant inspection of Him who said, "whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before his holy angels." But I am persuaded that you are *not* ashamed of Jesus; yet there is great need for us all to ask ourselves repeat-

edly, "am I fully on the Lord's side?" because this very examination itself produces the best effects, as it prompts us to give evidence before others of the reality of our hope, and it brings us near to God, who can make us strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and faithful even unto death. Your letters always affect me; your company you know delights me; and what shall I say of your attachment to me, but *that it meets return.* I am often indeed induced to believe that you are too careful of me, and too much concerned about me. Expressions of gratitude on my part from my mouth or pen I know you do not want, therefore I shall not trouble you with them. My mind is perfectly at ease about the present or future laws of the house, as well as about any situation after I have filled it. O that I may be stayed on God! I often think what a pity it will be, if from our friendship there should arise no good effect; however here I am wrong, because I am myself a witness that good effects have arisen to *me;* but I long that to us there may be opened fresh sources of comfort and joy in God, and that we may then be made abundant blessings to each other. I am going to preach next Sabbath at Roydon, a village near Hertford, where I have reason to hope God has owned and blessed my unworthy labours before. May he do so again. Perhaps I may go to Hertford to-morrow after-

noon, as it was the place of my nativity, and is now the residence of my dear father, my sisters, brother, and mother-in-law. I could say much more, (though in the same feeble and desultory style) but you perceive my paper is full. I cannot expect to see you at all till Tuesday. The coach comes in town on Monday evening, about half past six. If I can I will walk then to Fleet-street.—Adieu, my dear friend. THOMAS SPENCER."

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

"One of our fellow students has just delivered us a good sermon from—"The righteous hath hope in his death."—I enjoyed his sermon much more than I generally do those which are delivered to us on Thursday evening. This was so experimental—so scriptural—so pious, that it found its way to my heart. May you and I, whenever we shall come to die, have a lively, a sure, and a certain hope of reigning in life by Jesus Christ. Whilst so many are called away around us, surely we should recollect the uncertainty of our own continuance upon earth; and as death is still potent, still inexorable, and still delights to surprise, let it be our chief concern to have an interest in the affections of the heart of that Saviour who shall destroy this last enemy, and give to his followers a crown of glory changeless as his own.—On him may we now

both live by faith, that so when we have served our generation according to his will, we may fall asleep in his arms."

Talking with him on the subject of his health, which seemed declining beneath the pressure of so much exertion, his friend said—"Do you wish to be early laid aside—or do you desire a premature grave?" "Oh no," said he, "you know my wish—to have a meeting in the country, surrounded by trees—occasionally to see the shadows of the leaves quivering on the walls, in the reflection of the setting sun. A burial ground near, in which I and my people can together lie! To live a long, honourable, and useful life, bringing many souls to the Saviour!—This is the summit of my wishes."—Though it was denied him to enjoy the *first*, the *last* object of his desire, and by far the most important and dearest to his heart, he did possess; for rarely has so short a ministry been blessed by the conversion of so many souls. Every week in Liverpool, discloses some fresh instances of its success—and one and another is perpetually rising up to say—"By the grace of God I am what I am;" but it was the ministry of Spencer that led me first a humble suppliant to the throne of mercy.

On Sunday the 5th of November he was appointed to preach at Cambridge, in the pulpit lately occupied by the Rev. Robert Hall, A.

M., a name dear to genius, as to religion. The day following he spent in viewing the University. In a letter dated the 3d, he says, "Last night my surprise was excited by seeing that I am not appointed on the list for any place in town, but for *Cambridge*. I am to stay Monday over at Cambridge, to look at the colleges, &c. I shall think much of Kirke White." And aware of the respectability, both in wealth and talent, of the congregation he was called to address, he adds, "The Lord make me prudent and faithful: may it appear that he has some good end to answer by conducting me thither."

Public as Spencer's life had now become, and exposed as he was to the influence of every unholy passion which popularity might awaken, he yet maintained a close and humble walk with God. He courted solitude, and for the best of purposes. Of him it may be truly said, "his fellowship was with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." The holy and the heavenly tone his mind received in those retired hours, gave a peculiar unction to his ministry; and the knowledge which, by deep communion with his own heart and constant intercourse with God, he had obtained, rendered his preaching remarkably profitable to believers, and gave him a skill in administering instructions adapted to all the varieties of their experience. Of this, the following is a pleasing specimen.

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

November 9, 1809.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—Be assured that I, as well as yourself, have walked in darkness, and complained that there was no light. Fluctuations in experience are, I am sure, my lot, whilst my only consolation in such circumstances still remain—'tis the unchangeableness of Christ. Oh! what is so calculated to reconcile our minds to the way our Father calls us to travel, as the recollection, that whilst we are found in it, Jesus is the same, and that to the end of the journey; and in every trying circumstance he is a present help. In darkness he will enable us to trust in the Lord, and stay ourselves upon our God; yea, he will cheer our desponding souls with visitation sweet. Seasons in which we experience darkness of mind, and depression of soul, are necessary: they form the analogy between us and those who through *tribulation* are gone to heaven: they render us fit subjects for the illuminating and refreshing grace of Christ: they add a higher relish to the renewed enjoyment of the light and liberty of the gospel; and they serve to prepare us for that world where the Lord shall be our everlasting life, and our God our glory.

"Reflecting upon deliverance from such times of depression should teach us to say—'*Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord*

hath dealt bountifully with thee!' It should lead us to anticipate future favours, and rejoice that he that hath delivered us, can and will deliver; and since the day has dawned, and the shadows have fled away, we should most cordially adore him who has been appointed to give light to them who sit in darkness, and to guide our feet in the way of peace. May you and I ever enjoy the presence of Jesus, our best friend; share in his tender sympathy; his kind reproofs; his excellent counsels. May he be our God for ever and ever, and our guide even unto death. Then we need fear no evil. If sensible that he is with us, we may pass through midnight glooms, and experience a season of great darkness, and yet look forward to a future time, when with pleasure we shall sing,—'*The Lord is my light, of whom shall I be afraid.*' O! that I may be enabled to commit your soul and my own into the hands of Jesus as unto a faithful Creator. I can now add no more, than to say that,

"I remain affectionately yours,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

About this time his health again declined. A severe cold for some days deprived him of his voice—and he was compelled to rest one Sabbath day from his public work. What were his feelings in prospect of that Sabbath, this extract will declare.

"Yesterday I passed a miserable day. The

thought of the pain of mind the letter I sent home would occasion to my friends, hurt me much, and I was much worse than I had been before, as my lungs and throat felt more inflamed. To-day I think I am better, but still very far from well. I can scarcely bear the prospect of a silent Sabbath. I think I shall be quite out of my element to-morrow. Oh! that I did but more firmly believe, that he who is my Saviour does all things well, and that he who sustains the dread character of Judge of all the earth must do right."

Reflecting on this temporary indisposition in a letter to his father, he says,—"I have reason to hope that the measure of affliction with which our heavenly Father thought fit to visit me, has been made a blessing to my soul. It gave me time for reflection and close self-examination. It gave a new zest to my feelings, and when it was removed, I hope I was inspired with fresh ardour to live for the glory of God."

Amid the constant bustle of a public life, the retirement which temporary indisposition affords, must be most beneficial to a pious mind. Then it can relax into a calm and intimate communion with itself. It can quietly indulge in such a review of the past—and such an anticipation of the future, as will tend not a little, under the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, to curb its impetuosity—correct its levity—and regulate its principles.

From the chamber of sickness, the exercises of the pulpit will be furnished with materials of the highest order; which experience of similar affliction only can excite.

The greater part of the Christmas vacation Mr. Spencer spent at Brighton, and on the first day of the year 1810, he preached at the Rev. Mr. Styles's chapel, to young people, from 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27, 28—"*Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardst his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes and weep before me: I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord. Behold I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace. Neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same.*"

The good seed which he was the instrument of scattering in Brighton, very rapidly sprang up. In a letter to his father, written immediately on his return from thence, and dated Jan. 12th, 1810, he says, "A young person who had heard me at Mr. Styles's last year, was called by divine grace under my instrumentality, and died before I returned there this year, bearing an honourable testimony to the religion of Jesus, and to her interest in it. Oh! what hath God wrought!"

We now arrive at the period of Mr. Spen-

cer's first visit to Liverpool. Before we pass on with him to that new and interesting scene, it may be well to pause, and to take such a general view of his mode of thinking and acting, while a student, as the following characteristic sketches from the hand of his most intimate friend, will furnish. I shall present them in a miscellaneous way just as they occur. Thus the reader will converse with him, —hear his own sentiments expressed in his own language, and imperceptibly become familiar with the man.

"That passage," said he, "is much upon my mind—'Let no man despise thy youth.' I understand the apostle thus:—Let your walk and conduct be such, that no man *can* despise thy youth. And such shall be my own."

"He was favoured with peculiar facility in composition. 'Many a sermon,' said he, 'have I composed between Hoxton and your house.' His ideas flowed faster than he could write them, and when alone, our conversation has met with frequent interruption from his stopping to commit to paper, before they escaped him, the ideas crossing his mind. Turning to me privately, as I sat by his side one evening at the tea-table of a friend, 'Look at that,' said he, 'will it do?' It was the sketch of a sermon, which he had composed during the conversation. 'I don't know,' said he, (and those who suppose my friend was boasting, did not know him) 'I don't know, said he,

'that for a long time I have had time enough for any one sermon; I was crampt in every head for want of time.' He occupied at that time from 65 to 75 minutes in preaching his sermons, though his hearers were not aware of it."

"His memory was remarkably tenacious; he could regularly repeat every service in which he had ever engaged, with the chapter which he had read, and those of his acquaintance who were present. Returning from Holloway, after preaching, said he, 'Did you perceive any thing particular in me this morning?' No. 'I was very ill in the pulpit; my memory totally forsook me; I could not recollect my subject, but having my notes in my pocket, I took them out and read them.' I am glad of it, was my reply; I give you joy; you can no longer condemn assistance to an imperfect memory. 'O no, I boast no more; from henceforth, I am silent upon that subject.'

"Few persons have held pulpit eloquence in higher estimation than Spencer did, or in more contempt when it stood in competition with the interest of souls. I remember asking his opinion of an eloquent sermon which he had been hearing—'Why,' said he, 'I could have wept over it—I could have wept to hear immortals so treated.'"

"To one who observed to him—'Your morning sermon yesterday was approved, but not that in the afternoon,' he replied, 'No, I

suppose not, and I will give you the reason. In the morning, when I preached on privileges, they were pleased; but when, in the afternoon, I came to duties, they remembered their treatment of their late venerable pastor. I particularly respect aged ministers, and love to assist them, and generally add a trifle to the collection, when I have been preaching in behalf of a church which has an aged minister.'"

"A lady, who had misunderstood an idea in his sermon, wrote me a hasty letter, charging him with Antinomianism, and me with gross impropriety in hearing him. It was Saturday night, and he was to preach in the same pulpit the next day. I went to inform him of the circumstance, that he might take an unperceived opportunity of explaining himself. He held out his hand to give his usual affectionate squeeze, when I drew back. I said, 'I don't know how to shake hands with an Antinomian' 'An Antinomian! What is the matter?' 'Read this proof of it.' He read it; his pleasantry subsided; and with a countenance which spoke the feeling of his noble soul. 'O,' said he, 'this letter does me good.—The attention of that congregation would have led me to suppose that they were pleased, and perhaps profited by what they heard; and yet you see, that there were those present who not only misunderstood me, but supposed that I was a preacher of Antinomianism. This let-

ter does me good; for sometimes Satan claps me on the back, here in my study, and says—'That sermon will do very well, and especially from one so young as you—and then I begin to mount, and fancy that I *am* somebody; but such a letter as this clips my wings—and then,' said he, (with undescribable expression) 'I drop into my place—the dust. Do bring me all the intelligence of this kind that you can.'"

"Preaching one morning at Hoxton, after he had prayed as usual at his entrance into the pulpit, I missed him; he bent forward for a considerable time so low, that I could scarcely perceive him from the gallery. When I afterwards asked him if any thing ailed him, said he, 'When I went into the pulpit, and saw that crowded audience, recollecting that they were all looking to me for instruction, and remembering my own youth and inexperience, I was overwhelmed, and leaning forward, implored more earnestly the divine assistance.'"

"While preaching at Jewin-street, he one afternoon took the two lower steps at once, in ascending the pulpit stairs.—When we afterwards met, I asked, 'Did you notice the manner of your going into the pulpit?' 'I did, and thought that you would also—it was inadvertent; but it was wrong. It did not become the solemnity of the place.—I never remember such a circumstance before, and will be more guarded in future.' As a proof of the *necessity* of his watchfulness over the minutiæ

of his actions, I mention that an aged Christian said to me some time afterwards, 'I loved Spencer's sermons, but there was a lightness about him.'—'A lightness! when, and where did he discover it?' 'At our meeting, in jumping up the pulpit stairs.' 'Did you see it more than once?' 'No.' 'Then I can tell you, *that* once he felt and lamented it as deeply as you could; and I am sure that he never repeated it. Is not that satisfactory?' 'It is.'"

"Spencer followed Cecil; he united deep humility with true ministerial dignity: nor do I conceive it possible for a youth to be less affected by popularity than he was; and as to flattery, if his flatterers had known the light in which he viewed them, they would have been silent. Coming from a vestry, where adulation had been offered—'Don't fear for me,' said he, 'on account of what has passed; it was too weak to hurt: my danger is when those, on whose judgment I depend, speak unguardedly.'"

"Spencer was particularly happy in his choice of texts for particular occasions. 'I feel great difficulty,' said he, 'in preaching at Hertford, where I have to address many who walked with God before I was born. To-morrow will be the first Sabbath that I have regularly supplied there. I have chosen for my subject, Romans xvi. 7.' In which he showed what it was to be in Christ; and the duties which aged Christians owe to younger ones—

faithful reproof and exhortation—prayer for them, &c. For his sermon on regeneration, he chose James i. 18; which, as he said, comprised the *whole* subject;—the efficient *cause* —'The will of God;' the grand means used—'the word of truth;' the great end in view—that believers should be 'first fruits of his creatures.' A gentleman who possesses a fine mind, said to me, 'I had heard so much of Spencer, that when I went to hear him, I expected to be disappointed; but I found the reverse to be the case. When he gave out his text, it was with an emphasis which so forcibly laid open the apostle's argument, that my attention was rivetted, and I was perfectly astonished.'"

"Mr. Spencer's simplicity in dress was well known. He avoided in that respect the very appearance of evil, that his ministry might not be blamed. One Sabbath morning, when he called for me, he had a new coat on, which I told him I thought was more fashionable than he would approve. 'I did not know it,' said he: and on the next Sabbath morning, he asked me if I thought it more becoming *then*: he had had it altered."

Mr. Spencer was appointed by the committee to spend the midsummer vacation in this year at Newington chapel, Liverpool, then destitute of a pastor by the death of the Rev. David Bruce. His impressions with regard to

the state of religion and manners in this place, made him very averse to going there, and it was his anxious desire that some other student should be sent to supply the vacancy.

But a visit upon which so much depended could not be abandoned by a superintending Providence, to the obstacles of his prejudices or the influence of his feelings. His destination was fixed. It was the voice of duty, and he obeyed. He arrived in Liverpool on Saturday, the 30th of June, 1810, and commenced his public labours on the following Sabbath.

Mr. Spencer selected for the subject of his first discourse, Luke xxiv. 32, "And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures." In the afternoon he preached from Heb. xii. 24, "And to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel." And in the evening from 1 Cor. xv. 25, "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

The impression produced by the labours of this Sabbath, will be long remembered. The emotion then awakened has not subsided to this day. Every sermon that he preached, tended to deepen the conviction of his piety and talents—and to endear him to the people. His lively, affectionate manner, and the simple but elegant style of his discourses, captivated all who heard him. Every sermon produced

accessions to the congregation, of such as, drawn by the report of his extraordinary powers, pressed to witness their display. The chapel soon became crowded to excess—and not alone the thoughtless and the gay, whom the charms of a persuasive eloquence and an engaging manner might attract, but pious and experienced Christians sat under his preaching with deep attention and delight. There seemed to be indeed *a shaking amongst the dry bones*. A divine unction evidently attended his ministry, and such were the effects produced, that every beholder, with astonishment and admiration, cried, 'What hath God wrought!'

In his own views of Liverpool, too, a great change was wrought, by the remarkable circumstances attendant on his ministry. The kind assiduities of the family under whose hospitable roof he resided, and an intercourse with the pious part of the congregation, which they carefully promoted,—tended gradually to weaken his prejudices, and at length completely to turn the bias, and reverse the purpose of his mind. The period of his stay was limited to five Sabbaths; but at the earnest solicitation of the people, he consented, after communicating with his friends in London, to add another to the number. And in the afternoon of the last Sabbath, he preached from Deut. xxxiii. 3. "Yea, he loved the people," in such a style of endearment and affection, as

seemed to warrant the indulgence of their warmest hopes. The last week of his visit was spent in the most delightful intercourse with Christian friends; and on Tuesday, the 7th of August, he left Liverpool with reluctance and tears.

Very soon after his return to Hoxton, Mr. Spencer received from the church and congregation at Newington chapel, an unanimous and pressing invitation to accept the pastoral office over them. The call was dated on the 8th of August, 1810. After near seven weeks' deliberation, Mr. Spencer returned an answer in the affirmative. In what exercises of mind these seven weeks were spent, those who knew the peculiar circumstances of his situation can well conceive.

To a friend in Liverpool he writes—

"I hope you will forgive me for the long, the doubtful suspense, in which I have been obliged to detain you; in my own view I have acted rightly, and I have no doubt but you will say that it was all proper, when you come to hear my statement. It is astonishing what I have had to meet with through the *kindness* of my London friends—kindness you will think improperly manifested, when I tell you, that they, with very few exceptions, entreat, beg, and request, that I would not settle at Liverpool. I can only tell them, that in this affair,

'I hear a voice they cannot *hear;*
I see a hand they cannot *see.*'

And have the leadings of Providence lost their importance? or the direction of heaven become merely matter of idle talk? I have not written individually to any person in Liverpool besides yourself: I should have found a difficulty in speaking of the business before I had made known my determination. By the first Sabbath in February next year, I shall (God willing) be again in Liverpool, when I hope the presence of my covenant God will accompany me, and his Spirit grant me wide success. The prospect of leaving my friends and connexions for so distant a place as Liverpool, and especially as many of them oppose the plan, sometimes fill me with melancholy gloom; but 'thy will be done' is a petition that well becomes me in my situation; may I have grace given me to use it with a sincere and believing heart.

* * * * *

"I trust it will appear, that the general good of the church of Christ, and of the inhabitants of Liverpool, is the object to which I have directed my warm and unremitting exertions. Farewell.—I remain sincerely yours, THOMAS SPENCER."

Thus happily was a point of so much importance to the interests of religion in Liverpool determined. A consideration of the issue of *this* affair, together with many others perpetually occurring, should teach us to suspend our judgments of persons and places we have

never seen—and should tend to weaken those unjust and injurious prejudices against them which we too hastily form—too tenaciously cherish. Often we picture to ourselves the most enchanting scenes, the most delightful associations, in connexion with a spot we are about to visit, and are disappointed—and as often we find those charming scenes, and happy associations, in regions which our prejudices had invested with every thing gloomy and repulsive. Had Spencer yielded to the impulse of his feelings, he had never become pastor of a church in Liverpool.

From the period of his acceptance of the call to Liverpool, till February, 1811, when he actually entered on the pastoral office there, his time was wholly occupied in the diligent pursuit of his studies, and the labours of the pulpit. Not a Sabbath passed, but witnessed twice or thrice his faithful publication of the gospel of peace.

In what way his mind was exercised during this period—and how his principles as a Christian triumphed over his feelings as a man in the prospect of a long and painful separation from those he loved—may be seen by the following letter to a friend in Liverpool:—

Hoxton, Dec. 5, 1810.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I am persuaded that you will excuse my neglecting to write to you so long, when you recollect that the hope I daily

entertained of seeing you in town appeared to represent my troubling you with an epistle as unnecessary. I am extremely pleased to hear of the increase and welfare of your family; I cannot but feel an interest in their prosperity and happiness: may the Lord pour his Spirit upon your seed, and his blessing upon your offspring, that they may spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses! I suppose I need not inform you, that I anticipate my journey to Liverpool with mingled emotions of mind. The idea of a long and painful separation from my connexions does certainly at times overwhelm me with melancholy gloom; I have not yet learned to conquer my feelings, nor am I particularly eminent for philosophic heroism. The idea that I am going where divine Providence has directed me, does occasionally impart to me strong consolation; may my wishes as to extensive usefulness among you be answered; may they be exceeded in the prosperity of the church and congregation, and in the increase of spirituality and holy enjoyment in my own soul!"

On Wednesday evening, 23d January, he preached at Stansted, and on Thursday evening again at Hertford. This was, I believe, his last visit to his native town, and to his father's house! The separation which then again took place between himself and his beloved family was final. The farewell which he bade

to the scenes of his infancy and childhood was eternal! I cannot suppress the melancholy feeling which this reflection has awakened in my mind. I have arrived at length upon the threshold of a mournful detail, which all along has been anticipated with emotions of distress. Alas! that one so useful should be so soon removed! And that ere we enter upon the relation of the solemn engagements of his pastoral life, we should be compelled to notice circumstances so closely connected with his death!

The following Sabbath, January 27th, was the last he spent in London. On that day he preached in the morning at Hoxton chapel, from Phil. iii. 8—"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." And in the evening at Tonbridge chapel, from 2 Cor. iv. 3—"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." The labours of this Sabbath completed his engagements at Hoxton and Tonbridge chapels; but on the evening of the following day (Monday) he took an affectionate leave of his beloved friends—the constituents, the tutors, the students, and the congregation at Hoxton, from the pulpit of that chapel. The crowd that pressed to hear his last sermon (for so it proved) in London, was immense. One common sentiment of attachment and grief seemed to pervade the assembly. A friend charged

him on that occasion not to play upon the passions. Not that he was in the habit of doing this; but there appeared on this occasion a probability that he might. To that suggestion he replied—that "neither his feelings nor his conscience would admit of such trifling." He addressed the people on this interesting occasion, from those memorable words of Paul—Acts xx. 24, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus."

Thus were Spencer's labours in the metropolis closed for ever: labours—the renewal of which, thousands anticipated with delight. But he was ripening fast for glory; and rapidly advancing to the termination of his course. Yea, the impression of his excellence and the feeling of regret at his departure, was yet strong and lively in the hearts of many, when the tidings of his death shed a deeper sorrow through the scenes and circles which he had edified by his public instructions, or enlivened by his private friendship!

It was on the 28th of January, that Mr. Spencer preached his farewell sermon at Hoxton chapel: and it was on the 15th of August, in the same year, in the same pulpit, and to nearly the same congregation, that his funeral sermon was delivered by the Rev. Henry Forster Burder, one of the tutors of

the academy. In that discourse a just and elegant tribute was paid to the mingled piety and talent which formed the charm of his ministry. From the known endowments of the preacher, and from the opportunities which he enjoyed of obtaining a correct estimate of Mr. Spencer's powers, that tribute must derive considerable propriety and force: and as it chiefly regards his ministerial labours in London, I shall close these imperfect memoirs of them with an extract from it.

"During the last two years of our valuable friend's residence at Hoxton, he was very frequently engaged in preaching in London and its vicinity. As this chapel has been, on many occasions, the scene of his labours, and has been often thronged with the multitudes attracted by his abilities and piety, I need scarcely attempt an estimate of his pulpit talents. That they were eminent—that they were brilliant—that they were captivating—will not, I think, be denied by any who witnessed their exhibition. He undoubtedly displayed no small degree of pulpit eloquence, and his eloquence was distinguished by characteristic features. It was not the kind of eloquence in which a youth of genius might be expected most to excel, and of which luxuriance of imagination constitutes the chief attraction; it was not a peculiar vivacity of fancy, which gave life to his addresses, although in this respect they were not deficient; but they rather owed

their effect to the energy and animation infused by the ardour of his soul, and to the unaffected fervour of his religious feelings, the impression of which was aided by no small advantages of person, voice, and elocution. In endeavouring rightly to appreciate his qualifications for the duties of the Christian ministry, I must not omit to notice the truly edifying manner in which he conducted the devotional exercises of the pulpit. His gift in prayer was peculiarly excellent. The language of his petitions seemed to breathe the ardent aspirations of a heart alive to God, and accustomed to enjoy fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

That he was maturing fast for the enjoyment of his reward, even when he left London to commence his pastoral engagement, is a conviction indelibly impressed upon the minds of those who were accustomed to attend his preaching, or mingle in his society. They remember certain expressions, both of countenance and language, which seemed to indicate a tone of piety—a spirituality of feeling—too exalted for a long continuance here. And it is to be regretted, that such expressions, at the time so powerful in their influence, and so carefully preserved by a tenacious memory, no pen—no pencil can portray. Hence the sermons of animated and extemporary preachers, when introduced to us from the press, lose half their force and beauty. The

scope of the discourse—the process of the argument—may be indeed preserved; but the unpremeditated, momentary flashes of holy fervour, and of brilliant genius, cannot. The eloquence of the eye—the expression of the countenance—the meaning which is sometimes thrown into every limb and muscle of the frame—are wanting. And though it is pleasing to possess a memorial of those, whom living we revered and loved, yet the imperfection of the copy only deepens our regret at the loss of the original. In the preaching of Spencer, it seemed as though he saw before him every object he described—and felt the full force—the vast importance of every subject upon which he spoke.

Preaching one evening at Back street, Horsley-Down, and speaking of the reward of the faithful gospel minister—"Methinks," said he, "I already hear the melodious accents of the Saviour's voice, saying, '*Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord.*'" It was remarked, that he appeared as though he heard a voice personally addressing him. His anticipation was in a very few months realized!

On Sunday, 3d of February, 1811, Mr. Spencer commenced his stated, pastoral labours at Newington chapel, Liverpool. He was then just twenty years of age—possessed of every endowment that could render him eminent as a minister—and every amiable

disposition that could endear him as a friend. The people of his charge, together with numbers who participated with them in their joy, hailed his entrance on his sacred duties with delight. From him they fondly anticipated a long series of varied and useful instructions—on him they gazed with admiration, as affording them no mean example of a holy and devoted life—and to him they looked with pleasure as their children's friend. That he was prepared to meet these high expectations, none who have contemplated the superior endowments of his mind, can, for a moment, doubt—his literary attainments, though not splendid, were respectable—his theological knowledge was considerable—his acquaintance with mankind indeed was scanty; he had only moved amongst the excellent of the earth; but this, while it might expose him to certain inconveniences, gave him this advantage—that he appeared in all the native ingenuousness of unsuspecting youth. His love of study was great, which insured a constant supply of interesting materials for his public ministry—whilst he possessed a facility, an ease, an elegance, in the communication of his thoughts, displayed by few. To all these, he added the graces of the Spirit in no common degree—the glorious attributes of a soul eminently devoted to God—a solemn awe of his sacred office—an habitual reference to the final account he should be called to render—and

an ardent zeal for the Redeemer's glory!—Such was Spencer when he entered on the duties of his stated ministry!

But I shall justify this sketch of his character by some extracts from his letters.

In one dated Brighton, January the 9th, 1811, he says—

"I dread the termination of the happiness I now enjoy. It will be the commencement of a long and agonizing separation. Oh! that henceforth I may live more devotedly to God than I have ever yet done. I can truly say this is my desire; for to be a preacher of the gospel, and not to feel its *due abiding* influence on the heart, is awful indeed. Since I have been here I have trembled for myself, when I have recollected the numerous follies of the four years I have spent at Hoxton. The Lord pardon me, and teach me to be more holy. Pray for me. Affectionately, yours, ——"

TO MR. JOHN HADDON.

Liverpool, February, 1811.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am safely arrived at the scene of my future labours. My journey, though long, was far less irksome than any one I have before undertaken. The roads were bad; this made us late in our arrival at Liverpool. We did not reach it till a quarter before twelve last night. The short time that I have yet spent here has been quite *pleasant*—

it has been *happy*. The serious people of the congregation have already paid me many kind and Christian attentions. With the blessing of the Master whom I serve, I expect to-morrow to spend a very delightful Sabbath. My best feelings for the glory of our Lord, and the increase of his kingdom, will, I hope, be more strongly excited than ever they have yet been. I cannot but think that the Head of the Church has some great work to accomplish in Liverpool, and the desire of my heart is that I may be the instrument employed to effect it. Oh! for a large measure of the influence of the blessed Spirit to render me ardently pious, and to keep me zealous in my endeavours to do good to souls. I know *here* are numbers who *pray* earnestly for me, and whilst these pious people besiege the throne of grace on my behalf, I will not fear that my God will desert me.—To be holy and to be useful at this moment, appears to be the first wish of my heart. Do you say, 'indulgent God, let it be accomplished!'

"I am tired with my journey, and pressed for time. Believe me, in the bonds of Christian affection, sincerely yours,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

According to his anticipation, he did enjoy on the Sabbath a happy day, although in the morning he was considerably agitated by the peculiarly solemn circumstances of his new

and most responsible situation. In the morning his text was admirably adapted to the occasion.—Gen. xxviii. 22; "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again, to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God, and this stone which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house, and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."—In the evening he preached from 1 Cor. xv. 49; "And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."—In the course of the ensuing week he wrote as follows:

Liverpool, Feb. 7, 1811.

"O! what a memorable day to me was the first Sabbath I spent in this place; every circumstance that took place appeared worthy of attention and big with events; never before had I entered a pulpit, with those awful, solemn feelings with which I was impressed that morning. The idea of appearing in a new character, of entering on a station which I have no view of relinquishing till the day of my death; the weight of responsibility which attaches to the ministerial character; the dread lest I should act in any way unworthy of my sacred office; all these things would naturally impart an unusual solemnity to the mind. On

THAT DAY heaven is my witness of the holy resolution I formed. Oh! that God may ever enable me to put them in execution."

The attention which his labours had excited, while an occasional supply, was repeated, now that he had commenced his stated ministry. Soon the chapel became again crowded to excess. The town was filled with his praise—the most respectable of the inhabitants were perpetually disappointed in their attempts to hear him, not being in any way able to gain admittance to the chapel, so excessive was the throng. His coming seemed to be the commencement of a new era in the religious interests of Liverpool—at least amongst the dissenters. The prejudices of many were gradually subdued. The tone of public sentiment, with respect to that class of Christians, amongst whom he laboured, considerably raised. Many, by no means anxious to conceal their opposition to his principles, were compelled to pay a just, though reluctant tribute to the fascinations of his eloquence; and many whom the fame of that eloquence brought beneath the sound of his voice were savingly converted unto God; and of these, some are at this moment honourable members of the church of which he was the pastor.

So far from being elated by his popularity, and rendered vain by the uncommon attention he excited and received from all ranks—every

Sabbath, while he grew in public estimation, he seemed to sink in his own esteem, in humble acknowledgments of his own unworthiness, and in a yet deeper sense of his awful obligations. The next is an extract of a letter to his father.

Liverpool, February 26, 1811.

"I assure you I have every reason to believe, that this is the sphere in which Infinite Wisdom intends me to move. My congregation is vast every time I dispense the word of life. A general spirit of hearing seems excited in this large town—the prospect is in every respect encouraging, and I am induced to hope, that great good will be done. I feel the awful responsibility that attaches to my employment; and when I recollect the multitude of souls committed to my care, I tremble, and exclaim, '*Who is sufficient for these things?*' I often think how different is my situation now, to what it was when I lived at my father's house. I am called to an active and laborious scene. Once it was enough for me just to execute your wishes, and then in the quiet enjoyment of our own family circle to experience satisfaction and comfort. Now God has blessed me by making me a blessing to others. May he preserve me faithful, and make me an honourable and holy Christian?"

In another letter to his father, dated April the 9th, 1811, he says—

"The interest excited in this town is still lively and great. I trust much good is done. Prejudices are removed, convictions are impressed on the mind, and the cause of Satan appears to tremble under the influence of the doctrines of the Cross."

This is indeed a portrait worthy the attention of the candidate for the Christian ministry—the student and the minister. It is charming to behold such excellence, so universally applauded, veiled from its own observation by such deep humility.

TO ———

Liverpool.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I earnestly wish for you the support and the care of our constant and unchangeable Friend, the Lord Jesus Christ: every day seems to convince me of the necessity and the happiness of a close walk with God: let us be always trusting in God, and praying to him, and there is no doubt but he will preserve and bless us. I was much pleased with an instance of resignation to the Divine Will, I lately met with. A pious and valuable member of our congregation lost his property to a considerable amount, by an alarming fire. I was with him soon after it happened, and it would have done you good to have heard him say, with so much calm and sacred acquiescence as he discovered, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken

away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' I could not but wish that in all times of trial, I and my friends might have the same God to strengthen and fortify the mind as he had. Indeed you were mistaken, my worthy friend, when you judged my letter to you an expression of joy at separation from my friends. No, no. There is not a heart in the world that feels more truly and sincerely on such occasions than my own; but I wish ever to remember the great object of my existence, and of my call to the ministry—not selfish ends, but the glory of my God; and when he commands, whatever flesh and blood might suggest, or carnal wishes desire, I must immediately obey. It is this thought, and the persuasion that I am employed in the vineyard of the Lord, *just according to His will*, that give me composure and peace of mind; and I can witness that prayer unloads and eases the mind as much at Liverpool as any where else. Here I hope I have felt such salutary convictions of the awful responsibility of my work, as I never knew before, and as I hope I shall never forget; and happy am I to find, that *here* there are many of the Lord's jewels, his choicest favourites, many who I trust call on the name of the Lord Jesus, out of a pure heart and with a faith unfeigned. In our prayer meeting, I have enjoyed a heaven begun below, and that kind of devotion which can well repay me for the sacrifices I have made. I sup-

pose you have heard of the prospects of usefulness which open themselves before me: may I have grace to improve every hour of my time to the service of my God, and to maintain that holiness and integrity of conduct which will recommend the glorious gospel I proclaim."

The uncommon attention excited in Liverpool by Mr. Spencer's ministry, soon suggested the necessity of providing more accommodation than Newington chapel could afford, for the numbers who were anxious to enjoy the benefit of his stated labours. At first the idea of enlarging the old place of worship presented itself; but some difficulties arising, this was relinquished, and early in March it was resolved, that a chapel capable of accommodating two thousand persons should be erected—a committee of management was appointed—and an eligible spot of ground soon selected for the purpose. A most judicious plan for the building was proposed and adopted—the dimensions of which were sixty-four feet six inches in front, by ninety-six feet in depth. A liberal subscription was soon obtained, and the affair was in a state of such forwardness on his return from Brighton, that on the 15th of April, Mr. Spencer laid the first stone of the chapel, in the presence of an immense assembly—computed to consist of about six thousand persons. On that truly interesting

occasion, he delivered an appropriate address, and solemnly dedicated the place to God by prayer.

About this time Mr. Spencer removed from the hospitable abode of his early friend, with whom he had resided on his first coming to Liverpool, in order to lodge with Mr. Thurston Lassel, in the Park road; a pleasant situation, about half a mile from the town. It was the lot of Spencer to be beloved in every circle which he entered—and none who were so fortunate as to behold his excellence, and enjoy his friendship, ever resigned him without feelings of the deepest regret. I cannot deny myself the pleasure of extracting a sentence or two from the willing testimony which that friend has borne to the sterling worth of his amiable guest. I am the more anxious to do this, as it will unveil his character in private life, and show us what he was as the member of a family.

"We had the great advantage of Mr. Spencer's pious conversation and fervent prayers in the family for near four months, for he did not leave us till the latter end of April; it was indeed a pleasant, and I trust a profitable season, which we often review with great delight. With what pleasing emotions have we often surrounded our domestic altar, and witnessed the fervour of his addresses to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this delightful employ, he never seemed to engage

with half a heart; his whole soul was alive to the service of his God: he was serious in a serious cause, nor did any circumstances that arose ever seem to unfit him for the discharge of religious duties. Morning and evening he generally engaged in prayer at family worship; the variety he produced on these occasions has often astonished us; it was impossible to trace any thing like repetition; every prayer seemed quite new, and gave fresh proof of the powers of his mind, and the ardour of his soul.

"Mr. Spencer naturally possessed an amiable disposition, and was innocently cheerful; no one could say that gloom or melancholy was connected with his religion. In his manners he was simple and unaffected; any thing like ostentation or parade he disliked exceedingly; he would always, if possible, avoid mixing with large parties. The company of serious, pious, plain Christians was his delight. He was kind, generous, and tender-hearted; the wants of the poor and necessitous he was ready and willing to relieve; to do good and communicate he never forgot, knowing, that with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

But whilst all around him was prosperous and happy—whilst his ministry was successful beyond his most sanguine expectations—and hundreds were eager to administer to his comfort—his heart was the victim of anxiety

and grief. The continued and alarming indisposition of his friends at Brighton, inspired his delicate and susceptible mind with the most gloomy and agonizing fears. It was well. His heavenly Father saw he needed some thorn in the flesh, under the circumstances of his unexampled popularity, to prevent his being exalted above measure—and to preserve his soul in a frame of holy solemnity, and humble reliance on himself. Lest the sun of his prosperity should dazzle him too much, these friendly clouds were permitted to intervene.

The week following that in which he laid the foundation stone of the new chapel, Mr Spencer made an excursion into the country, and preached on the Tuesday evening at *Darwen*, and on the Thursday evening at a meeting of ministers at *Blackburn*.

During this journey he suffered much from the complaint to which he was subject—but although labouring under the pressure of severe indisposition, in the pulpit he rose superior to the influence of languor and pain—and his exertions on that journey are still spoken of by those who witnessed them, and they were many, with delight.

On his return to Liverpool, Mr. Spencer received a melancholy summons to Chester, to attend the funeral of his early and amiable friend, the Rev. Ebenezer White, and to deliver the oration at his grave. His obligations

and attachment to that excellent man have already been recorded. When arrived at the scene of death, his delicate mind seemed overwhelmed in an agony of grief. He stood weeping in unutterable distress over the cold remains of his departed friend. His bosom, formed for friendship, and even then the seat of no ordinary sorrow, was ill prepared to sustain the pressure of a stroke, by which he was suddenly bereft of one who had discharged for him the relations of the father, the tutor, and the friend! Mr. Walter White, who was the witness of his grief, has thus described it:—"I shall not easily forget this dear young man's behaviour on the evening preceding my brother's funeral at Chester. We were standing together by the side of the coffin, viewing the corpse—he wept excessively, and clasping his hands with great emotion, exclaimed, 'Oh! that I may but finish my course like him!' and turning to me he said, with his usual energy, 'Oh! what a fine thought it is, that the *bodies* of the saints are purchased by Christ as well as their souls.' And then passing his friendly hand gently over my brother's face, he said with great emphasis, 'This body is the purchase of Christ: it cannot be lost—it must revive again—all these limbs must resume their activity. Oh! with what fine sentiments and ideas does the Christian religion furnish us to what any of the heathen systems did!'"

Though excessively agitated in his whole frame, he yet sustained himself to deliver at the grave a funeral oration, characterized by tender and solemn eloquence—the eloquence of feeling and of piety.

His letters to his friends for some time after this event, contain occasional allusions to the death of Mr. White—and in a way which proves how much he loved him—how deeply he deplored his loss. In one he says—

"I have lately been visiting a scene of death at Chester: my worthy friend Mr. White is now no more in this world; but I doubt not, he shines illustrious in another state of existence. When I was eleven years of age he came to Hertford, and used to spend a great deal of time with me: ah! little did I then think I should have to deliver a funeral address at his interment, and so far away too from the place with which we were then familiar. Peace to his ashes, and eternal joy to his departed spirit! and ere long may I meet him in that blessed state, where disappointments will no longer be his lot or mine."

On the Sabbath evening following, Mr. Spencer preached a funeral sermon for his friend, in his own pulpit at Liverpool, from Deut. xxxiv. 5, "So Moses the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord." The sermon was solemn and impressive. Thus we record the mortality of others, and drop into eternity

ourselves. On that Sabbath evening three months, his own funeral sermon was preached in the same pulpit.

The following letter was written the day before the funeral of Mr. White.

TO MR. HADDON.

May 13, 1811.

"MY DEAR FRIEND—I am ashamed when I think of the length of time which has passed since I last wrote to you; but indeed since then I have scarcely written to any one, so much have I been occupied. What a beautiful and admirable narrative is the Dairyman's Daughter; if you can, get me two hundred of them, and send them to me the very first opportunity: they are just the kind of publication I want for several of my hearers. Procure me some of the Negro Servant, and of all the interesting modern tracts, which your own discretion may suggest. The Rev. Ebenezer White of Chester, has entered into the joy of his Lord. He was formerly settled at Hertford. I knew him and highly esteemed him. I am going to his funeral. Oh! how uncertain is human life! how necessary that habitual frame of piety which the Holy Spirit can impart to his believing favourites! May we both enjoy the sanctity of religion, love it for its *purity*, and be enabled to discern its holy excellences: then we shall show that our regeneration is real, and our hope of heaven well supported.

God is showing me more and more of the uncertainty of all things here, and the necessity of living the blessed life of faith upon the Son of God, who, I sometimes think I can say, '*loved me*, and gave himself for me.' I study a good deal, and find increasing pleasure in it. In visiting, as yet I have done but very little. The families I am most intimate with, are the *serious*, the pious followers of Christ; for I find that these alone can help me to comfort under my own trials, or in any way do me real good. But I know I must not be selfish. I must labour to do good in any way I can possibly think of.

"I am much pleased with my lodgings; the situation is so retired and beautiful, that it is every thing I can wish. I doubt not but you continue to pray for me: I need your prayers. I feel the awful responsibility of my work, and my own unfitness for it. I long to '*present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*' Remember me affectionately to all our friends.] I am sincerely yours,

"THOMAS SPENCER."

The day of ordination at length arrived. It was indeed an interesting day. The services were commenced by the Rev. Mr. Evans of Stockport, who read suitable portions of scripture, and implored the divine blessing upon the sacred engagements of the day. The Rev. Joseph Fletcher, M. A. of Blackburn, then

delivered an admirable introductory discourse, and received from Mr. Spencer his confession of faith, together with answers to the questions usually, on such occasions, proposed to the minister to be ordained. Mr. Spencer then kneeling down, surrounded by his fathers and brethren in the ministry, the Rev. John Cockin, of Halifax, offered up, with deep solemnity, the ordination prayer, accompanied by the imposition of hands. To this act of ordination succeeded a most impressive and affecting charge from the Rev. William Hordle, of Harwich, Mr. Spencer's former tutor and friend. The passage on which this excellent address was founded was Col. iv. 17; "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." The Rev. Mr. Roby, of Manchester, preached to the people of Mr. Spencer's charge, upon the duties which devolved on them in the relation that day publicly recognised, from Gal. iv. 18; "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." The service was throughout most affecting and impressive; it was characterized by a peculiar solemnity, both in the feelings of the ministers and people. The tender frame and delicate mind of Spencer was nearly overwhelmed by the awful considerations which then pressed upon him. Had the melancholy event which so rapidly succeeded this interesting service been at that time certainly announced, a seriousness more

suitable to the occasion could hardly have been inspired; and indeed in Mr. Hordle's charge there were passages which in the sad sequel of this history appear most singularly appropriate—bordering even on the prophetic! One in particular deserves to be recorded:—

"You, my dear young brother, must die, and stand at the bar of God. Your ordination service may be only a prelude to your funeral service, for what is man? Man is but of yesterday, and his days are as a shadow. How often have we seen the sun go down while it is yet day! and while the church has been pleasing itself with the prospect of enjoying the pious fervent labours of an endeared minister for years, has an unexpected stroke separated them for ever! Mourning survivors wondering have said, '*Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.*'"

Mr. Spencer was now fully invested with that sacred office, which from his infancy he had desired; and he set himself diligently to the discharge of its momentous duties. That he felt its importance, was evident to all. His habitual conduct and conversation proved it. To his most intimate friends he freely expressed his anxieties respecting it; and earnestly did he implore an interest in the prayers of his people and his brethren in the ministry. In the assurance that he laboured amongst a praying people, he felt confidence: and no

consideration is more adapted to relieve the mind of a faithful minister than this—while it pours unseen a thousand blessings on his head, it secures to his labours an affectionate attention, and an earnest desire rightly to appreciate and improve them.

On the first Sabbath in July Mr. Spencer dispensed, for the first time, the solemn ordinance of the Lord's supper. It was a time of love—a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The sweet impression of that happy day still remains, and its memory is yet dear to many. On the following Monday, at the social prayer meeting in the evening, in the bosom of his people, he again solemnly dedicated himself to God, and renewed his vows to consecrate all his powers to their service in the work of the ministry. Indeed all he wrote, or said, or did, indicated the holy fervour of his soul. Tenderly alive to the sacred delicacy of his character, he was anxious to sustain it well, that the cause of Jesus might not suffer by any spots it might contract. Conscientiously awake to every call of duty which his most responsible station might involve, he was ready to obey them all—that the ministry might not be blamed!—The following letter is from his correspondence about this time, and may be numbered with the last he ever wrote. The expressions which I have copied, are mingled with others sacred to the privacy of friendship. They promise pleasures

that were never realized—unfold prospects that were suddenly destroyed—and record arrangements that he was *not* permitted to fulfil!

TO MR. HADDON.

Liverpool, July 8, 1811.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—* * * * * * The ordination has, for the last fortnight, occupied almost the whole of my attention, and the impression, the solemn, the holy impression of which, I trust I shall never forget. Yesterday, for the first time in my life, I administered the ordinance of the Lord's supper, and found it to be indeed '*a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.*' My duties are more and more *important* and pressing. Conversations upon religious experience with candidates for admission into our church, and the calls of the sick and dying must necessarily engage much of my attention. But I can sincerely bless God, that amidst all the depression of mind I have suffered, my work has been my delight. The duties of the ministry have often refreshed, instead of having oppressed me. The pleasure of the Lord has prospered in my hands. I love the service of the Head of the Church better than ever I did: when I am watering others, I find that Jehovah the Spirit waters my own soul too! Oh! is not this an encouraging token for good?——In great haste, I am your affectionate friend, THOMAS SPENCER."

On Thursday, 1st August, about noon, one of his deacons called upon him at his residence, and he was occupied the whole day with him in visiting those who were to be received into the church; his conversations, with the respective candidates, were truly admirable and appropriate, and such as will remain in the grateful memory of those who had the happiness to enjoy them. On Friday he was occupied until the afternoon in writing letters to his friends. I am able to present the reader with extracts from two of them.

August 2, 1811.

"I find growing pleasure in my ministerial employment; this evening I have to admit eight new members to church communion; indeed, when I accepted this situation, I never conceived that I should have half the engagements or duties to attend to, which I now find must be accomplished, if I would merit the character of an active, useful minister of religion. I think my recent afflictions, and the solemn duties which now devolve upon me, have in a considerable degree chastened my character, and imparted, perhaps a seriousness to my general deportment, which may prove highly advantageous to me in future life. How long this will *last* I cannot tell; but I think affliction adds a weight to character that nothing else does, and especially to young people and young ministers.

I have lately been preaching in the villages round Liverpool.—Oh let us aim to glorify God, and then trust all our concerns in his hands, so that at the last, we may be accepted of him."

In another, to his father, he says:

"I was much hurt at the account of my mother's* illness; I hope no distressing circumstances have arisen; and by this time, perhaps, I may indulge the idea that you are better yourself. Oh! how necessary that we should all seek a better country, since here there is so much change, affliction, and wo. May every trial be sanctified to us all, and we be meetened for the inheritance of the saints in light."

Having concluded his earthly correspondence with his distant friends for ever, in the afternoon he resumed his pastoral visits amongst his people, and the candidates who were to be that evening received. At the church meeting he was particularly lively; with holy joy he welcomed the new members into the communion of the church, and as he gave to each the right hand of fellowship, he addressed a short but most affectionate and solemn exhortation, admirably adapted to their respective ages, stations, and feelings. Indeed, all the duties of the pastor's office were conducted by him with a propriety and an ease, which years of experience are frequently

* His step-mother.

unable to supply. With the unaffected simplicity of youth he tempered the dignity of age—he seemed to be at once at home in the duties of his new and important station—never embarrassed or confused; he appeared to have an intuitive perception of what belonged to his character and office, in every case as it arose; and following the inward suggestion, he acquitted himself well, and discharged with undeviating consistency the high responsibility he bore.

After the meeting, Mr. Spencer spent the evening in serious conversation with a few friends; leading with great fervour the devotions of the family, and closing a day of sacred duties, with uncommon calmness and placidity of mind.

The following morning, Saturday, he spent in his study, in preparations for the pulpit. In the course of the day he wrote to a young lady, one of the number received, the preceding evening, into his church—at the close of the note he said,—

"I suppose you anticipate to-morrow with feelings of solemnity; you will appear in a new light to the church of Christ, and the spectators of our holy solemnities; we shall share to-morrow Zion's chief feast. May the blessing of the God of ordinances be upon us all. Wishing you the enjoyment of perfect health, and much communion with your best Friend, I remain, &c."

But the scene closes rapidly upon us. On the last Sabbath of his life, August 4th, he rose with unusual health and spirits. The family with whom he resided always beheld him with peculiar interest on the morning of the Sabbath, such an air of angelic mildness and composure sat upon his countenance—and so deeply did he seem absorbed in the contemplation of the sacred duties of the day. That morning he preached from Jer. xxxi. 3,—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee."—The way of his discussing the subject was simple and interesting:—I have drawn thee—to the cross—to the throne—to the church—were the leading ideas in the discourse. It was particularly adapted to the occasion, so many new members being that day added to the church. He afterwards administered the Lord's supper in a most solemn and affecting manner. Such as witnessed the scene—and the number of spectators was about three hundred—bear a unanimous testimony to the deep solemnity by which it was characterized. His appeals to the conscience were so close and overwhelming—his invitations to the faint and weary were so pressing and tender—his countenance—his voice—his whole manner was so expressive of holy fervour, that every eye was fixed—every heart seemed moved. How long the impression will remain I cannot tell; but the emotions

enkindled by the transactions of that day are yet lively in the hearts of many—and numbers love to converse upon it, as one of those rare and highly favoured seasons, in which the distance between earth and heaven seems annihilated—and so transporting is the joy, that *whether in the body or out of the body*, the happy Christian can scarcely tell! To a friend, who afterwards hinted that he appeared to be very happy in prayer at the Lord's supper, he replied—"O yes; I thought I could have prayed, and prayed, and mounted up to heaven!" At the close of that memorable service—one, the ardour of whose feelings age had checked, observed, that "Mr. Spencer seemed that morning twenty years older in experience than he really was." At dinner he mentioned to the family, that he had received that morning a letter from a friend in London who had been formerly reluctant to his settlement in Liverpool, as though it were not the sphere designed by Providence for him. He then expressed the full conviction of his own mind, that he was precisely where he ought to be—under such an impression, he observed, that he was perfectly satisfied and happy; and added, "if it had not been the will of God, I should never have settled here."

In the evening, in the midst of a throng. such as is rarely witnessed, and from which hundreds departed unable to gain access, he preached from Luke x. 42, "One thing is

needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."—His chief object in this sermon was to show, that communion with the Saviour is the one thing needful. Throughout the whole discourse, it seemed as if all the powers of his mind, all the ardour of his soul, were infused into his composition, and his delivery. In the application, he was uncommonly urgent with the young—earnestly exhorting them to an immediate decision on the side of Christ—representing to them the folly and danger of deferring the important concerns of salvation and eternity to an uncertain futurity—and assuring them that *very soon* he should meet them at the bar of God, and that there he should be a swift witness against them. By those who are best able to decide, it was observed, that his last sermon was perhaps the most adapted for usefulness of any he had preached—and this observation, which was made immediately after its delivery, has been since most amply confirmed, in instances perpetually presenting themselves, in which that sermon proved instrumental in effecting the happiest impressions, many of which have issued in a saving change.

After the labours of the day he went to the house of a friend to supper; he did not appear to be unusually fatigued. With great fervour he led the devotions of the family. He read a portion of scripture, and gave out the 165th

hymn of the 2d book. He was remarkably copious and earnest in prayer—commending especially to God—the family—the church—the members who had recently joined—the missionary (who was present) and every object to which his holy and benevolent mind recurred. At supper the conversation was pure and spiritual—such as the book of remembrance in heaven preserves—such as will not easily be forgotten upon earth. The subject was sudden death. The countenance of Spencer, always animated, was lighted up with holy joy as he discoursed upon the glory of departed saints—he seemed to realize the scenes he attempted to describe, whilst he expressed his own conceptions of the transport and surprise in which the disembodied spirit will be lost, when first admitted to the immediate presence of God. He spoke much upon the blessedness of putting off the garments of mortality in a moment, and being caught up unexpectedly and instantaneously to heaven! He seemed to lose the memory of the day's fatigue in the interesting theme, and frequently observed, that he had not for a long time felt himself so free from weariness. A little after eleven, he parted with his friends for ever. Never did they discover more of the warmth of his friendship, or the ardour of his piety, than in this last, happy interview. His countenance seemed irradiated with smiles of ineffable benignity—his whole deportment indicated a mind ab-

stracted from the world, except so far as it was bound to it, by the benevolent desire of doing good, and holding communion and fellowship with God. So mature indeed did his character appear—so ripe did he seem for glory, that some of his friends could not but entertain a presentiment of his early removal. Though not then elevated to a higher sphere, he still appeared mysteriously weaned from earth. His loins were girt, and his lamp burning with unusual brightness, as though he expected the coming of his Lord. In its anticipation of future glory, his happy spirit seemed to try its pinions, preparatory to the glorious flight it was about to take.

On Monday morning, August the 5th, the last day that dawned for *him*, he rose rather later than usual; his mind was too active for his body: the exhausted frame required rest. After breakfast, he received a visit from a young lady, one of the members lately admitted into the church. He entered the room with a cheerful smile; and the family having retired after some general conversation, he said, "Well M——, you are now a member of a Christian church; yesterday you solemnly professed your faith in Christ, while the attention of many of your fellow creatures was fixed on you; God also beheld our profession—all heaven and hell witnessed the solemnity." On her expressing some fears lest she should be unable to act consistently with the profes-

sion she had made, he replied, "Live near to Christ—be much in communion with your own heart—be very frequent in addresses at a throne of grace, and there is no fear of you." Then referring to the long and agonizing distress which he had suffered through the alarming indisposition of his dearest connexions, and which seemed now happily removing, he said, "This severe affliction has not been sent, but for reasons the wisest and the best; from it I have learned many lessons, and have enjoyed much of the presence of God under it. O may my heart be filled with gratitude to Him who is the author of all our mercies."

Mr. Spencer was in the habit of frequently bathing, as he found it beneficial to his health. He purposed doing so that day, and had expressed his intention in the morning. He had just repeated the first verse of Cowper's admirable hymn,——

> "God moves in a mysterious way,
> His wonders to perform,
> He plants his footsteps in the sea,
> And rides upon the storm,"

when one of the family came into the room, and said, that if he intended bathing, it was time that he should go, as it would very soon be high water. He assented; but whilst a towel was procured for him, he turned to his young friend, and said, "I can't tell how it is, but I don't feel so much inclined to go, to-day, as usual." She asked if it was thought

good for his health—he answered, "Yes, it will brace my nerves after the exertion of yesterday." And, indeed, he had an immediate object in view, for he had folded his paper, and prepared his pen, in order to compose a sermon to be preached in the course of the ensuing week, on behalf of the Religious Tract Society, in London; and he was anxious that, by bathing, his mind might be invigorated for study, as he had frequently observed it to have that pleasing influence. Mr. Spencer and his friend left the house together, when turning towards the water, he said, "I must go this way." They parted. His friend sought again the bosom of her family—he went the way whence he never returned!

The following pages of this history must be filled with weeping, and lamentation, and wo. With cheerfulness Mr. Spencer took the path which leads across the fields towards the Herculaneum potteries, a little above which it was his design to bathe. The eye of his friend, beneath whose roof he dwelt, followed him till distance hid from his sight. Arrived at the spot which he had selected, not so much from a knowledge of the ground, as from the circumstance of its retirement, he asked a gentleman, who had been bathing, and who then was dressing, "if that was a good place to bathe at?"—he answered that it was, but that it was rather stony near the side, but better when further in. Mr. Spencer replied, "I

rather think it is a good place myself, and I don't like to bathe near the pottery, there are so many people." Mr. S. then asked again, "Is the tide nigh up?" to which he was answered, "About half past eleven." "Oh! dear," said Mr. Spencer, "it is near twelve." —As this conversation passed, Mr. Spencer was undressing, and, at intervals, humming a tune. When undressed, he walked towards the water, and spoke to a workman belonging to the pottery, of the name of Potter, who also was bathing, and who directed him which way to come into the water. While walking in, Mr. Spencer observed, that it was very cold— to which Potter replied, "You will not find it so cold when in." Potter then plunged into the water about breast high, and when he next saw Mr. Spencer, he was swimming within his depth, but soon afterwards the tide swept him round an abrupt projecting rock, where the water was from six to seven feet. Potter himself, who is an expert swimmer, soon found the current driving him round the same rock; but he immediately, with difficulty, swam to the shore, when he looked about for Mr. Spencer, and not seeing him, was much alarmed. At length, after the lapse of a minute or two, he saw the top of his head floating above the surface of the water. Potter could not tell whether he was amusing himself or drowning. He however cried out to him; but receiving no answer, plunged in again, and swam to the

rock, in order to render him assistance—but found it impossible.—Mr. Spencer having sunk in seven feet water, and the current being remarkably strong. Potter, with considerable trouble, and not till some time had elapsed, got up the side of the rock, and communicated the intelligence to Mr. Smith, of the potteries, who immediately ordered out two boats, which were directly manned and brought to the spot, when every exertion was made to find the body.

I have frequently examined the place; indeed, I take a mournful pleasure in visiting the scene; and I have sought the opinion of medical gentlemen respecting the *immediate* cause of Mr. Spencer's death. The spot is most unfavourable for safe and pleasant bathing. Whoever sees it at low water, is astonished that any person, acquainted with the nature of the shore, should venture there. There is a ridge of sharp and slippery rock, running in a curved direction, for many yards, into the water, and terminating abruptly; on either side of this most rugged ridge the fall is instantaneous, and from one to two feet. It is highly probable, then, that Mr. S. swimming, as was described, along by the shore, might bring himself up immediately on the edge of this treacherous rock, which being slippery, deceived him, and by suddenly precipitating him into deeper water, caused a spasm which directly suspended the functions

of life, and he sunk, without further agitation or conflict, in the arms of death.

In the meanwhile, the gentleman whom Mr. Spencer first addressed, returned, and, discovering the sad event, apprized them that it was Mr. Spencer the minister, who was lost. Potter renewed his exertions to find the body, assisted by the people in the boats, in which they at length succeeded, after it had been under the water about fifty minutes. By this time the melancholy tidings had spread abroad; and happily some gentlemen of the faculty being in the neighbourhood, and hearing of the event, hastened immediately to the spot, so that, ere the finding of the body, every thing was in readiness for instantly commencing the resuscitating process.

When drawn from the water, the body exhibited no symptoms of violence or struggle in the act of dying—the countenance was placid and serene—its features were perfectly undisturbed, and so lovely was its expression in death, that one of the medical attendants observed,—a painter could not desire a finer object!

On the arrival of the body at the beach, the water was easily expelled, and being then wrapped up in flannel, it was immediately conveyed to the house of Mr. Smith, where, by the kind exertions of the family, every necessary arrangement had been made for its reception.

The apparatus having arrived from Liver-

pool, and three medical gentlemen being present to receive the body, the usual methods adopted in cases of suspended animation were instantly pursued. They were soon joined by three other gentlemen of the faculty, who rendered every possible assistance; every expedient was, in the course of the afternoon, resorted to—but alas, in vain! and at five o'clock, in the opinion of all present, there remained not the faintest hope of restoring animation—the spark of life was totally extinguished.

Thus, in one sad moment, was lost to society and to the church of Christ, one of the loveliest of men—one of the most eloquent of ministers: upon whose lips, only the preceding day, hundreds had hung with delight, and the long continued and extended exertion of whose powers, in a larger sanctuary, the foundation of which he had but recently laid, thousands anticipated with eager desire! To tell how many hearts have bled, beneath this awful visitation, would require a fortitude which I do not possess—and constitute a volume not surpassed, in the anguish which it would describe, by any similar catastrophe in the records of human wo. The tidings spread through the populous town of Liverpool, with a rapidity, such as, in cases of public calamity, is usually inspired. They circulated through all ranks, and excited one common feeling of regret in every bosom. They reached the exchange, and produced an ex-

traordinary impression there; those who knew him, mourned the loss of one they loved—and those who knew him not, felt the agitation of that sudden shock, which the premature removal of such men occasions—they participated in the general sympathy—and deplored the loss of Spencer, as an event demanding general regret! Numbers hastened to the spot. Some incredulous, to obtain the sad assurance of the truth—and others to enjoy the mournful satisfaction of beholding that countenance in death, on which they had often gazed with transport, when kindled into radiance by the ardour of the soul that lately animated it. All was confusion and distress. Such a day has been seldom seen in Liverpool; a day of such dreadful gloom—such universal grief. From the countenance of every one to whom the tidings came, one might have imagined he had lost a friend;—whilst many, to whom by intimate acquaintance he had become peculiarly endeared—petrified at first with mingled horror and surprise, when recollection and feeling returned, yielded, for awhile, to the influence of the deepest sorrow.

Mr. Spencer was about twenty years of age; in his person and countenance eminently prepossessing; and of manners most amiable, conciliating, and engaging. As a preacher, his talents were held in a degree of estimation, and possessed an extent of influence, which have seldom been equalled in the annals of

pulpit eloquence. His discourses were rather persuasive and hortatory, than argumentative or disquisitive: they were addressed more to the imagination and affections, than to the judgment; and this, apparently, not so much from any deficiency of talent, as from a firm persuasion, that in matters of religion, the avenues to the understanding are chiefly to be sought in the heart. His sermons, thus constituted, were adorned with a felicity of expression, and delivered in an unremitted fluency of language, altogether surprising in extemporaneous discourses. These essential qualities of eloquence were assisted by an uncommonly distinct articulation, a tone of voice singularly melodious, and great gracefulness of action. Thus gifted by nature, and improved by cultivation, it is not surprising that he possessed the power of attaching an audience, in a manner that will never be forgotten by those who attended his ministry. Perhaps it scarcely ever before fell to the lot of any individual, at so early an age, to have diffused religious impression through so extensive a circle of hearers; and those who looked forward to the maturity of his powers, with the hope naturally inspired by his early excellence, will regard his loss as a public misfortune.*

But at the solemnities of interment, the strongest demonstration of public feeling was

* Liverpool Paper.

afforded. The concourse of people assembled to witness or assist in the last sad token of respect to his remains, was never, perhaps, equalled in Liverpool. Religion, Humanity, Friendship, and Genius, mingled their tears at his grave.

All the streets through which the procession passed, were crowded to excess, as also were the windows and balconies of the houses. But the greatest decorum was observed—and a seriousness, according with the solemn occasion, was manifested by all. The corpse was borne into the chapel, late the scene of Mr. Spencer's labours, and the Rev. Mr. Charrier, of Bethesda chapel, read part of the 15th chapter of the 1st of Corinthians, and the 4th and 5th of the 1st of Thessalonians, and offered a most solemn prayer. At the grave an eloquent and impressive oration was delivered by the Rev. Joseph Fletcher, A. M. of Blackburn. The mournful service was concluded by a prayer from the Rev. Mr. Lister, of Lime-street chapel.

"The whole scene," a Liverpool journal observes, "was affecting—it could not be otherwise. Every idea which could be associated with the spectacle was such as to excite the deepest sympathy. The flower of youth, scarcely opened, snatched from the stem of life by a sudden and rude attack of mortality: a minister, who lately fixed the attention of crowded audiences by the power of his eloquence, conveyed to the house of silence and

darkness; the fairest prospects of honour and usefulness in life blasted; the warm hopes of his friends wrecked in a moment; and the deep, the dreadful wound inflicted in the feelings of relatives, and the dearest connexions. Such, however, are the appointments of a supreme governing Intelligence, to which human choice and wishes must bow with reverence, supported by the general principle of the justice, wisdom, and benevolence, which direct the affairs of men. Similar afflictions are of frequent occurrence in private life, though they there pass unnoticed. Public characters excite attention both in their zenith and fall; and so far as society is bereft of virtue, useful talents, and active zeal, their death is a public calamity."

But not in Liverpool alone was the shock of Mr. Spencer's death felt—or the loss occasioned by his sudden removal deplored. Scarcely was there a district in Britain to which the melancholy tidings did not reach. The universal esteem in which the beloved youth was held, was manifested by the numerous sermons which were preached throughout the country, to embalm his memory, and to improve his death. In London several were delivered,—many singularly eloquent and appropriate; several have issued from the press, and have been noticed in the preceding pages. The sympathy awakened for the mourning church, was as general as the regret occasioned by

their pastor's death. Of Spencer it may be truly said, "devout men carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him," whilst the situation of his bereaved people excited in every bosom compassion and grief, "for they were left as sheep without a shepherd."

But we do wrong to mourn. His removal from our world was the dictate alike of Infinite Wisdom and Love. And the time appointed for his departure was the best. His character had attained that degree of maturity, for which God had destined it, on earth—he had performed the service which he was called to accomplish in the church. His sun rose with almost unexampled rapidity to its meridian—his work was completed with prodigious speed—yet, having reached his appointed elevation, and performed his allotted labour—*that* was the suitable period for removal. He had witnessed as much impression and effect, in his short ministry, as many an aged pastor would rejoice to observe, after years of incessant toil. Can his death be considered, then, as premature? If one labourer accomplishes his share of the day's exertions an hour or two earlier than his companions, may he not be permitted to retire to his rest before them?—Spencer has finished his course—he rests from his labours—and his works do follow him.

THE END.

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